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SUDAN

Sudan is one country with two governments. Years of civil war devastated the country and, according to some estimates, resulted in millions dead or displaced. A peace agreement signed in 2005 effectively left the country in two pieces, north and south, until 2011, when a referendum on independence will be held. The northern part, referred to as the Khartoum Government, is headed by General Umar al-Bashir; the other part, known as the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS), is headed by Lt. General Salva Kiir. Separately, the conflict in Darfur, in the west of the country, has grabbed headlines since it began in 2003; violence continues there despite international peacekeeping missions.

Predictably, years of strife have taken their toll on civil liberties, including freedom of the press. There is very little press freedom in the north, as the government controls both the state and private press and implements a strict form of Shari'a law that justifies denying many civil liberties. The few private media that have voiced critical opinions are closed or operate under tight control. The south is exempt from Shari'a law under the interim constitution, and the media there are allowed more leeway. Nonetheless, press freedom suffers when private media issue reports that the authorities there consider negative.

Despite the dim picture of media freedom in Sudan currently, some panelists expressed hope. "Gaining our freedom is still a long way off, but we believe that one day we shall achieve this and enjoy our profession as our colleagues in other countries, because these are our basic rights," said James Lemor, news editor for Radio Juba.

Objective scores stayed fairly close to the overall average. Objective 2, professional journalism, was the highest-scoring objective, at 1.63. The lowest-scoring objective was Objective 1, freedom of speech, coming in at 0.99. Objective 3, plurality of news, also scored low, at 1.09. The remarks of the MSI panelists show that the weaknesses in these two objectives are indeed the biggest threat to free-flowing information, opinions, and ideas in Sudan.

SUDAN AT A GLANCE

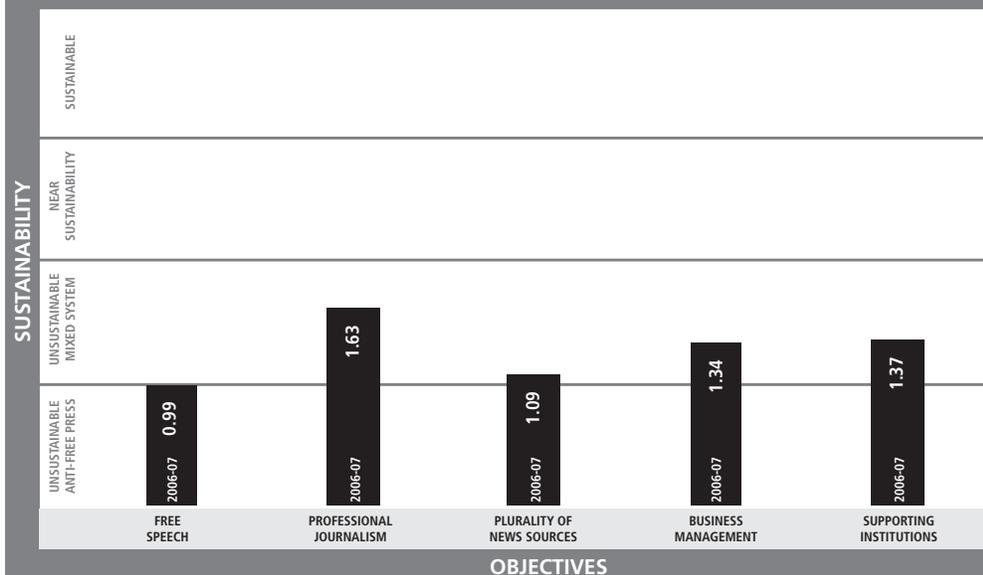
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 40,218,455 (July 2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Khartoum
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** N/A
- > **Religions (% of population):** Sunni Muslim 70% (in north), Christian 5% (mostly in south and Khartoum), indigenous beliefs 25% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** Arabic (official), Nubian, Ta Bedawie, diverse dialects of Nilotic, Nilo-Hamitic, Sudanic languages, English (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2006-Atlas):** \$30.07 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **GNI per capita (2006-PPP):** \$1,780 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **Literacy rate:** 61.1% (male 71.8%, female 50.5%) (2003 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Umar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir (since October 16, 1993)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print : 7 daily newspapers; Radio: 5 main stations; Television stations: 2 main stations
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Top three by circulation : *Al-Ra'y al-Amm* (private), *Al-Ayam* (private), *Khartoum Monitor* (private)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** Top three radio stations: Mango 96 FM (private), Miraya FM (private), Radio Juba (state-owned)
- > **News agencies:** Sudan News Agency (state-owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 3,500,000 (2006 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: SUDAN



Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):

Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):

Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

Near Sustainability (2-3):

Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

Sustainable (3-4):

Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Sudan Objective Score: 0.99

Most of the indicator scores in this objective hovered near the overall average. Some of the exceptions included Indicator 6, libel laws, which was significantly lower, and Indicators 3 and 8, market entry and media access to foreign news sources, both of which finished noticeably higher.

There is no press freedom in Sudan, and neither the previous constitution nor existing laws guarantee this freedom. For a long time, the country has been governed under Shari'a law, which has not included tenets of press freedom. In society at-large, freedom of speech is not valued in Sudan, especially in the north. But even in the South, which is currently exempt from Shari'a law, and despite provisions for freedom of expression and of the press in the interim constitution, panelists asserted that these freedoms are mostly absent. "In the whole of Sudan there is no press freedom, per se, because journalists are being arrested and harassed regularly," said Apollonia Mathia, senior editor with the *Juba Post*.

GOSS, with its semi-autonomous status, is in the process of drafting new laws, including those for the media. This has been undertaken in consultation with different stakeholders and will soon be tabled before the Council of Ministers and then to the interim parliament. The new media bill has several good provisions, including one that guarantees access to public information. "We hope that once these laws are put in place, they will protect us from several problems we are facing now," said Bullen Kenyi from the Southern Sudan Journalists Union.

In the south, five private media outlets and a state-run television station operate, despite the fact that no media laws are currently in place. There is relative—but limited—press freedom in this part of the country. But even here, this can be interrupted by security personnel and GOSS authorities, who might be angered by reports in the media considered to be negative.

In the north, the government controls both private and state-run media. Under the existing media laws, every media outlet must employ security personnel to review stories before publication. The only private media outlets that have tried to be independent—the *Khartoum Monitor*, *Al-Ayaam*, *Al-Sudan*, and *Juba Post*—have faced regular closure, harassment, and arrests of their staff by security agents.

The panel agreed that in the north the judiciary is controlled by the government and has never been independent. In the south, the pillars that make up the government, like the judiciary, are being established and have yet to be tested.

In the north, the National Press Council is charged with licensing of broadcasting media and has put in place a number of laws that make it difficult for private media to operate or gain licenses. In the south, this role has been assigned to the Ministry of Information, Telecommunications, and Postal Services, although in the future an Independent Broadcasting Authority will undertake these tasks. In either location, the panelists noted that entry into the media is not easy, unless you are a supporter of the government. In the south, however, the government has reduced registration fees by 20 percent to attract investors in the media.

Regular arrests, torture, and intimidation are the most common crimes committed against journalists in Sudan—north and south—and panelists noted that culprits are not prosecuted. In the south, security personnel have interfered with some media by entering newsrooms and threatening journalists. A case in point was Mirror FM, a UN radio station, which found itself occupied by soldiers after it ran what GOSS viewed as a critical news item. Similarly in the north, security operatives storm newsrooms and studios to intimidate or carry off critical journalists.

The laws favor state media. Editors and managers are appointed directly by the government and have no guarantee or expectation of editorial independence. State media can more easily access public information than the private media.

Unlike in the north, where access to public information is not simple, in the south the situation is fairer, although at

LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS PROTECT AND PROMOTE FREE SPEECH AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION.

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

times the situation depends on the person in charge of the sought-after information.

Under Shari'a law, several journalists have been handed prison sentences through trumped-up libel charges. It is incumbent upon the state to prove guilt in such cases, but because the judiciary is not independent the defendants almost always wind up losing. The US State Department's 2007 Country Report on Human Rights Practices reports that government critics are also charged with other crimes, such as being accused of plotting coups.

The panel stated that entry into the journalism profession is free in Sudan, if risky. However, licensing requirements exist. The National Press Council tests editors to determine qualifications. Journalists must also pass stringent language tests in order to receive accreditation.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Sudan Objective Score: 1.63

Panelists ranked only two indicators as appreciably different from the average. Indicator 3, self-censorship, came in nearly a point lower. Indicator 6, entertainment does not eclipse news, finished well ahead of the average.

Journalists do their work professionally and in most cases double-check their sources of information. They also will, on occasion, consult experts when the need arises. Some media do a better job than others in covering niche topics. Overall, some reporters and their editors are ill-trained, with only basic journalism skills, while others are more

JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

experienced and able to produce better-quality news reports. Society also shapes the media by pointing out mistakes and other deficiencies. The panel noted that the media have also worked on a draft of code of ethics, although this is not yet complete.

As much as editors and reporters may wish to be independent, under the circumstances in Sudan doing so is not easy. The media end up serving the interests of those in power, killing stories when they feel that releasing them may injure the relationship. Self-censorship, therefore, is a normal procedure. However, the panel noted that journalists cover most key events, even security issues. Sensitive assignments must be handled with caution, panelists added.

Some owners do not interfere with the daily management of their media outlets and are just interested in profits. Others, however, do interfere and go to the extent of dictating programs to be run at particular times. Other media owners interfere with the editorial independence and censor some of the programs that they think do not serve their interests.

Pay levels are very low, with average pay for a staff reporter between \$200 and \$250 per month. Working for the state media is more lucrative, with salaries ranging from \$250 to \$600 per month, depending on the position. Freelancers in the south are paid about \$7 per story, and those attached to only one media outlet are paid a retainer of about \$250.

Low salaries have resulted in corruption in the media. However, "those who are paid well, such as editors, end up killing good stories after getting kickbacks," added Lemor. David Aruai Dau, senior bureau producer for Sudan Radio Service, gave an example of a story on a company's sewage pipe that was flowing directly into the Nile. An initial story appeared in one of the newspapers but was suddenly dropped.

Advertisements and entertainment are given more time on broadcast media than news.

In the north, facilities and equipment for gathering news are relatively modern. There are also several printing companies to support the work of print media. However, the panel said that in the south there are no modern facilities or equipment. Private broadcasters, for example, lack good recording equipment, editing facilities, and cameras. Print media owners depend on Khartoum and Kampala for printing their newspapers. This affects the media negatively, as the products are of poor quality and there are some delays in delivery and distribution.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Sudan Objective Score: 1.09

Three indicators in this objective fell noticeably far from the average. Indicators 2 and 5, citizen access to media is not restricted and private broadcasters produce their own news, ended up somewhat higher than the average. Indicator 3, state media reflect the views of the political spectrum, finished well behind the average.

As indicated above, the north has fewer media outlets, and those that are private are burdened with meddling and harassment by the state. In the south, panelists said, one finds a wide range of media, including both state-run and private daily, weekly, and monthly newspapers, magazines, and radio stations. In both the north and south, television is state-controlled. Because of the history of the media in Sudan, it has not been easy to establish community broadcast media. However, in the south a group of businessmen and politicians is planning to set up rural radio stations to broadcast in local languages.

Private media provide both local and national coverage, but only a small portion of the population can afford to buy newspapers. The majority of the population listens to radio, and others, mostly in cities, watch television. Panel members agreed that those who live in cities have more access to the media than those who live in villages. City dwellers are able to compare different news sources available to them.

MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE AND OBJECTIVE NEWS.

PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
- > Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
- > Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.

Internet access is available only in cities and some small towns. Due to low income levels, most people cannot afford to access the Internet. The US State Department's 2007 Country Report on Human Rights Practices indicates that e-mail traffic is monitored in the north.

Panelists said that government restrictions on access to both local and international media exist but are indirect. There are no laws that bar people from accessing foreign media, but security operatives prevent people from listening to foreign radio or watching foreign television, except for stations from Arab countries. Panelists said that very few Sudanese are interested in reading foreign languages apart from Arabic.

Panelists felt that state media serve as a mouthpiece for their ruling party, and as such spend most of their time promoting government programs. Even most private media in the north do the same; the few that have tried to deviate from this have been closed on several occasions or have had their reporters arrested or harassed by state agents.

There is only one news agency, which was established by the government. It is fully under state control and is not independent. It provides news for both electronic and print media that need it, but mostly for those that support the government. In the south, media professionals are attempting to establish an independent news agency, but these efforts have not gone very far to date.

Independent media produce their own news programs; the degree to which they differ from those produced by state media depends on whether they are in the north or south. Those in the north differ only slightly and do not offer a different perspective. Those in the south may differ but are guarded in their criticisms. In the south, furthermore, private broadcast news programs are of low quality because of a lack of facilities.

Media ownership is not very clear, and it is difficult to obtain this information from any government office. At the same time, panelists said, most people have no interest in knowing this information. Media owners, in most cases, do not want people to know the revenue they get from this business, circulation figures, area of coverage, and audience size.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Sudan Objective Score: 1.34

Panelists rated all indicators close to the average, with the exception of Indicator 4, advertising revenue is in line with accepted standards, which finished nearly a point ahead of

the average, and Indicator 7, audience and circulation figures, which finished at nearly 0.

Panelists reported that private media are run efficiently and as profitable business by owners. They employ professionals who manage different departments and sections of media outlets. Printing and distribution of newspapers is done privately and not subsidized by the state. This is carried out efficiently in the north; however, the story is different in the south. Publishers of serious, quality newspapers rely on printing services in either Khartoum or Kampala, Uganda. At times this causes delays for the newspapers to reach the market, panel members said.

Private media depend on a number of sources of revenue. These include advertisements, sale of printed copies, and, for some, sponsorship from the state. Panelists noted that this last source definitely influences the editorial independence of such media. The panel agreed that independent private media outlets that exist in Sudan have found it difficult to operate because of a lack of funds. Some community media have been forced to close for similar reasons.

The advertising industry is well developed in cities in the north, and one can find several advertising agencies that work with all types of media. In the south, panelists said, the advertising sector requires a lot of development to operate in a streamlined fashion. The size of the advertising market is difficult to judge, as media managers will not reveal their advertising revenues.

The panel noted that advertising takes about 15 percent of broadcasting time. In print media, advertisements are given more space as well because of the revenue they attract.

INDEPENDENT MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED BUSINESSES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets.
- > Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
- > Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

Officially, private media do not receive any subsidies from the government, but the panelists said that some media outlets in the north quietly receive support from the state, which in the long run affects the editorial independence of these media outlets. Only those outlets that are sympathetic to the government are given subsidies through advertisements from state agencies. While this is common in the north, this phenomenon has yet to be observed in the south.

To get feedback from their readers and listeners, a few media outlets carry out research. Some of the media outlets that follow and implement their research results have benefited by increasing sales and volume of advertisements. Media have used call-in programs, questionnaires, focus groups, and commissioned research to acquire information on the preferences of their readers and audiences. However, no companies monitor circulation figures or measure broadcast audiences.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Sudan Objective Score: 1.37

Only Indicator 1, trade associations, did not finish within a half point of the average.

Several media associations have been established to defend journalists' rights and promote their welfare. These include the Sudan Journalists Association, which covers all of Sudan, the Association of Independent Media in Southern Sudan, and the recently founded Union of Journalists of Southern Sudan. The panel noted that despite the existence of these professional associations, they have not been very useful

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
- > Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

because of the country's political situation. Even the few members of these associations do not pay membership fees, which makes it difficult to run them. "The associations have tried to advocate for media independence, but government does not listen to them, and most times leaders are intimidated and threatened with arrest," one panelist said. "When journalists are arrested, it's the media houses they work for that make follow-ups with relevant authorities," said Mathia.

The panel agreed that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) work in defense of press freedom and freedom of speech. Some of these NGOs include Norwegian Church Aid, with an arm to build capacity for media outlets through training, and the BBC World Service Trust.

Several universities and other institutions in the north offer degree and diploma courses in journalism. Panelists felt that they are of good quality. The only problem, they said, is that the courses of study are in Arabic. This has been a big problem for people from the south who may wish to study these courses but do not speak Arabic. There are no training institutions in the south.

However, a few media outlets in the south, like the *Juba Post*, have come up with in-house training programs for journalists who join the profession without any training. Based on this experience, the *Juba Post* plans to set up a training institution for the media, a first of its kind in the south. It plans to start by offering certificates and then expand training opportunities in the future.

Several printing companies in the north are in private hands. They import newsprint for themselves, and this industry is handled as a profit-making business. As mentioned above, in the south print media rely on printing companies in Khartoum or Uganda. Media distribution agencies in the north are in private hands. In the south, distribution is handled informally by each newspaper. The panel noted that, in the past, broadcast transmitters were controlled and owned by the government, but the situation is changing slowly; today some transmitters are in private hands.

Panelist List

Isaac Billy Gideon, freelance reporter and photographer, Lambek

Surur Ali, journalist, Khartoum Radio, Khartoum

David Aruai Dau, senior bureau producer, Sudan Radio Service, Juba

Nyero Alex, deputy news editor, Bakhita Radio, New Site

James Lemor, news editor, Radio Juba, Juba

Bullen Kenyi, chief editor, *Juba Post*, Yei

Veronica Lucy, director of english news desk, Radio Juba, Juba

Florence Okono, coordinator, Sudan Human and Media Rights Monitor, Dafur Region

Jane Kenyi, advertising manager, Morongo Community Radio, Morongo

Moderator

Apollonia Mathia, senior editor, *The Juba Post*, Juba

The Sudan study was coordinated by, and conducted in partnership with, Eastern Africa Journalists Association.