



Sudan Civic Space
Monitor

SUDAN CIVIC SPACE SITUATION REPORT

JANUARY – MARCH 2022

Status: REPRESSED

Current Quarter Q1 2022	Previous Quarter Q4 2021	Trend
3.6	3.8	Negative

1.0 – 2.0	2.1 – 4.0	4.1 – 6.0	6.1 – 8.0	8.1 – 10.0
Closed	Repressed	Restricted	Narrow	Open

Overall civic space in Sudan remains REPRESSED, however unlike the slow and steady decline witnessed over previous quarters the decline during the first quarter of 2022 was significant. Rights of association and assembly were hardest hit with continued enforcement of the state of emergency and the violent response of authorities to peaceful protests calling for a return to civilian rule following the military coup of 25 October 2021. Rights of freedom of expression and access to information has also deteriorated significantly with journalists being targeted and harassed by authorities and official news agencies such as Al-Jazeera Mubashir having their licenses revoked for their active coverage of the protests.

Key events taking place during the first quarter of 2022 that have had an impact on civic space in Sudan.

On 3 January 2022, Prime Minister Abdulla Hamdok resigned from office. His resignation came a little under 2 months since he was reinstated into office following a political agreement signed with the military in November 2021. The November political agreement was meant to pave the way back to restoration of civilian rule following the military coup of October 2021. His resignation came on the back of continued street protests to the political deal he had signed with the military, and the violent repression of these protests by the authorities with increasing loss of lives.

January 8th witnessed the launch of an intra-Sudanese dialogue process that would be facilitated by the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS). Under the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sudan and Head of UNITAMS, Mr. Volker Perthes, the intra-Sudanese political process aims to support “[Sudanese stakeholders in agreeing on a way out of the current political crisis and agree on a sustainable path forward towards democracy and peace.](#)” The UNITAMS dialogue



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process is expected to contribute towards improved freedom of expression and association amidst a declining and shrinking civic space.

The **UN Human Rights Expert to Sudan, Adama Dieng concluded his official visit to Sudan (20 - 24 February 2022)** during which he met with senior Sudanese government officials, representatives of civil society organizations, human rights defenders, heads of UN entities, and diplomats. The visit which was originally scheduled for December 2021 had been delayed due to the Sudanese government's refusal to meet with the independent expert. In [a press statement](#) at the end of the visit he called on the authorities to comply with their obligations under international human rights law and de-escalate tensions by putting an end to the use of excessive force against protesters, lifting the state of emergency, and releasing all protesters and activists that were being held in detention.

In March 2022, the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group convened its examination of Sudan's human rights record. The review was based on information presented in 1) the [national report](#) submitted by the GoS; 2) [reports of independent human rights experts and groups](#) (treaty bodies and other UN entities); and 3) information provided by [other stakeholders](#). The final adoption outcome report is scheduled for release in May 2022.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND EXPRESSION Status: Repressed

Current Quarter Q1 2022	Previous Quarter Q4 2021	Trend
3.7	4.0	Negative

1.0 – 2.0	2.1 – 4.0	4.1 – 6.0	6.1 – 8.0	8.1 – 10.0
Closed	Repressed	Restricted	Narrow	Open

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION deteriorated significantly during this quarter and continues to be rated as REPRESSED.

Freedom of expression continued to deteriorate especially amongst journalists and the press sector. Journalists, bloggers and activists experienced interference, harassment, and physical attacks some of which were perpetrated and instigated by the authorities. On January 12, the [authorities arrested two photographers from the Chinese Xinhua News Agency](#), who were subjected to interrogation that extended for hours before they were released later the same day. In a statement on January 13, [the Journalists' Network revealed that the security forces beat](#)



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[three journalists](#) and attempted to run them over in their troops carrier. Security forces also stormed the office of Al-Arabi TV news network in Khartoum and took three of its staff to an unknown destination. Attacks on journalists were also carried out by non-state actors – [Al Jazeera news network journalist Abdel Raouf Taha and his photographer were attacked and beaten by unknown assailants](#) during their coverage of a rally in front of the headquarters of the UN mission in Khartoum that was organized in support of the army and rejecting foreign intervention (UNITAMS dialogue initiative) in the affairs of the Sudan.

Infringements on media freedoms and independence included the suspension by security in February 2022 of several programs that were being broadcast on national television. Programs that were suspended included the investigative series *Beyout Alashbah* (the Ghost Houses) and *Sana'iyi Alshar* (the Crafts of Evil) that exposed security brutality and torture during the previous regime, and the talk show *Hiwar Albinaa Alwatani* or the Dialogue on National Construction that hosted high profile guests discussing/speaking on various issues related to nation-building.

A decision by the of the Ministry of Information on 16 January, [retracted, the license of Al-Jazeera Mubasher](#) news network claiming that the channel's handling of Sudanese affairs was unprofessional and contrary to professional standards. On the same day, [Al-Hadathaha \(Modernity\) newspaper announced it would be permanently suspending its publication](#) citing the unconducive and hostile environment which curtails its ability to operate independently and puts it journalists at risk.

On March 25, [security authorities in the state of South Darfur stopped Al-Beshaish theatre troupe from performing a play](#) that was to be performed as part of the Nyala Festival celebrations of the International Theatre Day. The play embodied the events of the December revolution that toppled the regime of ousted President Omar al-Bashir and was planned to be shown on stage at the *Al-Beheir* theater in the state capital of Nyala.

Internet access continues to be unaffordable to large segments of society especially with the low-income levels and the ever-increasing prices of various goods and services. In March 2022, the [Ministry of Finance and National Economy announced it would be increasing the Value Added Tax \(VAT\) from 35% to 40%](#) as of April 2022, resulting in reciprocal price increases in the data and internet services. Concerns also continue to grow about the increasing trend of hate speech and misinformation on social media that is undermining dialogue and fueling inter-communal tensions and violence. Social media activists have also observed a new tactic where Facebook pages owned by some of the Resistance Committees are flooded with posts intended to distract or confuse their visitors – especially at times when the RCs are announcing protests – alleging the presence of a foreign security agency using these techniques to prevent content from appearing during protests.

Access to information continues to be constrained by a lack of adequate laws or policies which make it easier for people to access public information.



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RIGHTS OF ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY
Status: Repressed

Current Quarter Q1 2022	Previous Quarter Q4 2021	Trend
3.4	3.8	Negative

1.0 – 2.0	2.1 – 4.0	4.1 – 6.0	6.1 – 8.0	8.1 – 10.0
Closed	Repressed	Restricted	Narrow	Open

RIGHTS OF ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY declined significantly during this quarter and continues to be rated as REPRESSED.

Sudan's weak legal framework governing freedom of assembly has facilitated the post-coup crackdown on assembly rights. A [presidential decree issued in December 2021](#) had further expanded security forces' powers to arrest protesters, and granted immunity to security force personnel for the duration of the state of emergency that was imposed with the onset of the coup. Outside of the emergency context, Sudan's criminal code also continues to provide authorities with broad discretion to prohibit protests and harshly penalize protesters.

Freedom of Association for some segments of civil society remains impeded. Unofficially recognized professional unions and syndicates have been targeted. [On March 30th, the Sudanese Teachers Committee reported that security authorities carried out a number of arbitrary arrests of teachers](#) for their participation in a strike and arrested both the chairman of the Sudanese Teachers Committee in the locality of Omdurman and a teacher in Western Darfur state.

Freedom of Assembly continues to decline amid regular street protests demanding the country's military leadership transfer political power to civilian authorities. Clashes regularly break out between the protesters and security personnel during these gatherings, with security forces often using tear gas, and live ammunition to forcibly disperse the protestors. During demonstrations organized in the capital Khartoum on 15 February three (3) protestors were killed and 137 were injured according to reports by *Al-Jareeda* newspaper. According to the [Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors](#) (CCSD) the death toll amongst protestors has risen to 53 death with 12 of these having occurred since the military coup of October 2021. On 17 February, the [Emergency Lawyers Committee organized protests](#) outside the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Khartoum calling for the release of activists and political prisoners detained since the coup.

CSOs Autonomy and Rights especially amongst the professional unions and syndicates continues to be severely compromised in the absence of a trade unions law and the continuation of the state-appointed committees that have been mandated to manage the affairs of some of



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these unions during this interim period. Meanwhile, some professionals have pressed ahead without the consent of the state and began to setup their independent unions/syndicates. On 15 February, [representatives from the Founding Committee of Journalists Syndicate/Union, together with the Committee for the Restoration of the Sudanese Journalists Syndicate and the Preliminary Committee of the Sudanese Journalists' Union signed on a draft statute for their forthcoming union and a draft press code of honor.](#)

Civil society groups such as the Resistance committee have been targeted because of their activism and organization of protests in resistance to the military coup of October 2021. [Waves of arrests against trade union leaders and prominent members of the resistance committees, some of whom were transferred to Soba prison east of the Sudanese capital took place at the end of March 2022.](#)

NON-DISCRIMINATION / INCLUSION
Status: Repressed

Current Quarter Q3 2022	Previous Quarter Q4 2021	Trend
3.6	3.6	Negative

1.0 – 2.0	2.1 – 4.0	4.1 – 6.0	6.1 – 8.0	8.1 – 10.0
Closed	Repressed	Restricted	Narrow	Open

NON-DISCRIMINATION AND INCLUSION remained unchanged during this quarter and continues to be rated as REPRESSED.

Specific **marginalized groups** who are struggling to get their fair share of civic space and inclusion have largely been the IDPs (mostly in Darfur but also in the suburbs of the capital Khartoum) and Persons with Disabilities. IDPs across camps in Darfur lack social protection and [continue to face acute shortages of food.](#) [Christian minorities in al-Hajj Abdullah area of Gezira state were attacked by unknown extremists at their church in March 2021.](#) The priest Estafanos Adil Kajo who was also attacked along with three other women, accused the police of colluding with the assailants, who filed the case as a brawl and placed him under custody for allegedly disturbing the residents of the neighborhood and claiming ownership of the church grounds.

Women rights continue to come under duress. In a step intended to intimidate and silence the voices of women activists and groups, [security authorities, in January 23, raided the home of Amira Othman, head of the Mubadarat La likahr Alnisaa \(No to the Oppression of Women Initiative\)](#) and took her to an unknown destination. Women activists are also targeted during protests and in March 14th, 2022, following a crackdown on protests in Khartoum, near the



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bridge of Masalama, [an 18-year-old woman was gang raped by 3 members of the Central Reserve Forces](#) according to the victim and witnesses.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION Status: Repressed

Current Quarter Q1 2022	Previous Quarter Q4 2021	Trend
3.6	4.0	Negative

1.0 – 2.0	2.1 – 4.0	4.1 – 6.0	6.1 – 8.0	8.1 – 10.0
Closed	Repressed	Restricted	Narrow	Open

During this quarter CITIZEN PARTICIPATION declined significantly and continues to be rated as RESTRICTED.

The continued absence of a functional government since the military take-over of power has rendered citizen participation obsolete with hardly any opportunities or platforms whereby individuals or groups can meaningfully engage in dialogue directly with the state. However, several platforms and initiatives to facilitate dialogue between citizens on the way out of the political crisis that was triggered by the military coup of October 2021, have sprung up during this period. The UNITAMS initiative for dialogue was announced in January 2022 but [has struggled to gain traction](#), with observers criticizing it as lacking in terms of process and open-ended with no clear timeline. National-led dialogue initiatives and processes which have appeared include the Khartoum University Professors Initiative, a Roadmap by the Umma political party, and multiple others. In March 27th, [the Khartoum-state Resistance committees also put forward their proposal for a political charter for the transitional period](#) under the title of "The Establishment of the Authority of the People".

This report is produced as part of the [Sudan Civic Space Monitor](#) an independent online platform dedicated to monitoring and safeguarding civic space in Sudan. The report is based on news alerts and information published on the Sudan Civic Space Monitor website and analysis provided by Sudanese civil society actors from different backgrounds and expertise.

Four fundamental pillars of civic space which are monitored and reported on by the Civic Space Monitor are freedom of information and expression, rights of association and assembly, non-discrimination/inclusion, and citizen participation.