Share Mania: Mapping Misinformation and Disinformation in Sudan

from September 2021 to October 2022

Beam Reports

Contents

Beam Reports

We are a data-driven, citizen-centric web-based explanatory news company.

We are obsessed with empowering the public with trustworthy explanatory news to increase citizen participation and counter disinformation and misinformation.

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Preface

This study is part of the Sudan Fact-Check Network project, affiliated with Beam Reports, to fact-check rumors and analyze the disinformation environment in Sudan in light of the swelling phenomenon of the spread of such information in its media space.

Hence, Beam Reports initiated an effort to find out why it was carved out and to identify the actors involved in its dissemination, in addition to an attempt to encompass disinformation campaigns in Sudan's political sphere.

The study addressed rumors and disinformation in the Sudanese digital sphere using reports of Beam Reports' disinformation observatory; Marsad Beam, along with other media reports that covered disinformation in Sudan.

A methodology was adopted in this study whereby the disinformation campaigns monitored through reports of Marsad Beam were divided, so that each campaign covers a specific stream of disinformation to evaluate its content and to find out why it exists, in addition to monitoring the actors therein.

A number of tools and means utilized by disinformation content publishers were revealed, and it was established that such tools and tactics are confined to the following: images and video clips fabrication, documents fabrication, using outdated media, spreading outdated news, Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior (CIB) and hashtag spamming.

The study also found that there are interventions by some regional powers in the Sudanese digital sphere, targeting specific political figures and issues relevant to their interests in Sudan.

Moreover, the study revealed the reasons for releasing disinformation, subdividing them into political, security, ideological and personal agendas, as well as reasons related to polishing the image of specific public figures or institutions in what is known as reputation laundering.

Methodology

The methodology of the study was based on analyzing the environment of rumors and disinformation and the concomitant campaigns, as well as actors influencing them with regard to the Sudanese political sphere.

Based on the research methodology, the following approaches were followed:

- A qualitative analysis to assess disinformation in the Sudanese space and to comprehend the tools and tactics used in the process of creating misleading information.

- Analyzing the disinformation environment, i.e. analyzing the interaction that accompanies disinformation and studying the reasons for making up rumors, in addition to revealing the actors in spreading such disinformation and the motives behind that work.

- Conducting interviews with experts and stakeholders in combating disinformation.

- Introducing the legal framework for disinformation in Sudan.

The aforementioned analysis process was boiled down into analyzing reports issued by the following information sources:

1. Reports of Beam Reports' observatory; Marsad Beam.

2. Reports of Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior (CIB) from Facebook.

3. Reports from Stanford Internet Observatory.

4. Freedom on the Net reports issued by Freedom House organization.

5. Press materials from the New York Times and Global Voices websites.

The Sudanese Political Context

Sudan has been going through intense political curves since the overthrow of the National Congress Party's regime in 2019, through to the transitional period, and the Army's coup against the constitutional document in late October 2021.

Despite the complexities of the political scene, the transitional period has created a new reality that allowed the expansion of press freedoms, freedom of expression and other fundamental rights, which opened the door wide for many local and foreign actors to manipulate media content, by publishing disinformation, in order to pass on specific agenda or thoughts, or to provide test balloons that reveal the trends of Sudanese public opinion.

This space has rendered the Sudanese digital sphere a fertile breeding ground for news platforms of unknown origin and funding, which facilitated the spread of such disinformation.

The transitional government had faced opposition from those affiliated with the defunct regime, in addition to some entities rejecting the participation of the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) in the government, resulting in the spread of rumors and disinformation, by attempting to take advantage of the existing variations inside that alliance.

Abdalla Rizig, journalist and political analyst, has said, "One of the factors that contributed to the spread of disinformation was the lack of transparency during the transitional period. In addition, the turbulence of the political sphere has remained a major feature of the transitional period.

That factor triggered the prevailing state of uncertainty in the political and media sphere, once considered as part of the transitional stage."

He further added, "The transitional situation has made many matters seem to be in a state of instability, especially in regard to the ideas of political and social institutions in the public space."

Rizig indicated that there is another factor regarding the spread of rumors, which is the lack of a clear vision among the entities that managed the political transition, because the revolution has brought about unprecedented changes in Sudan's reality which made experimentation a continuous approach for all actors, i.e. the transitional political forces did not have previous adequate knowledge and experience to run the country.

In his turn, the journalist Haider Al Makashfi said, "The political, security and economic environment helped the spreading of disinformation and contributed to its dissemination and promotion.

The instability of the country's conditions across all areas, in addition to the constitutional and executive vacuum, the atmosphere of anticipation and expectation, and the absence of candidness and transparency, have all opened the door wide for the spread of rumors."

Suliman Khalid, journalist and political analyst, indicated that the December revolution with its huge magnitude and its slogans that stemmed from the reality of the aspirations of Sudanese people was a milestone in political thinking.

This has led to the apprehension of Sudan's neighboring countries because the current democratic tide in Sudan might bring back the wind of Arab Spring once again.

Thus, the scale of lurking in the Sudanese revolution was considerable. Misleading the public opinion came as one of the tools used in this regard.

Khalid went on to add that Sudan's distinguished location with its view of the Red Sea, its proximity to the Ethiopian plateau and the Republic of Egypt, in addition to its association with Arab and African issues, and the Sudanese people's aspiration to be integrated into the international community, has created strategic importance for winning Sudanese people's public opinion among many regional and international powers and pushed them to use propaganda of various kinds, including disinformation, to skew the Sudanese people's political stands, and as such, influence the political decisions and the power conflict formula.

In order to shed more light on regional and international interventions in Sudan, based on the above analyses, the study concludes that Russia is striving to gain a foothold on the Red Sea coasts in order to facilitate access to African countries that have Russian military troops therein.

Russia has started a negotiation process to establish a military base on the Sudanese coast since 2017, when the ousted Sudanese president Omar Al-Bashir visited Russia asking for protection to his regime. This has not been achieved so far due to the international turndown of Russian presence in the Red Sea.

Many reports also mentioned that Russia is involved in the gold mining sector and is working on smuggling gold back home outside the legal framework.

In March 2020, [ambassadors of the Troika countries](#) – The United States, Norway and the United Kingdom – issued a press release stating that "Wagner Group", a private military company closely linked to Russian president Vladimir Putin, is spreading disinformation in Sudan on social media.

On the other hand, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) seeks to obtain a concession of managing Sudan's ports in the Red Sea. This trend has faced opposition by Sudanese circles, and on that basis, the UAE participated in manipulating the content of the digital space to promote its positive role in Sudan.

The Republic of Egypt also has great interest in Sudan's affairs because Sudan is the southern neighbor that supplies Egypt with Nile water, plays a role as its gateway to central, southern and eastern Africa, and is its safe citadel from illegal migration.

The Renaissance Dam has added a new value to the bilateral relations between Egypt and Sudan.

Its impact on water supply of the River Nile, and as such, its impact on Egyptians' food security has prompted Egypt to work on ensuring that Sudan's stance is aligned to Egypt, and is against Ethiopia's efforts to fill up the Renaissance Dam's lake.

Therefore, Egypt has sought to ensure the continuation of military rule in Sudan by intervening in the Sudanese digital sphere and providing support to the Sudanese army's leadership since the dispersal of the Military Headquarters sit-in on June 3, 2019.

Likewise, Ethiopia is striving to mobilize Sudanese public opinion through the digital sphere to support its narrative version on the issue which promotes the need to complete the Renaissance Dam project and the ensuing benefits it will provide that would be reflected in the livelihood of Sudanese people.

The Context of Disinformation in Sudan

The Sudanese public has noticed the presence of organized disinformation on the internet in 2011 when demonstrations broke out against the ruling regime in conjunction with the Arab Spring wave.

Social media accounts showed up to mislead users by publishing incorrect information which sparked controversy and affected the credibility of the circulated information and as such, the intensity and resilience of the protests.

Subsequently, many reports have stated that the Public Intelligence Service – formerly the National Intelligence & Security Service – had set up its "Electronic Jihad Unit" in 2011 to proactively monitor blogs content, gather information on dissidents and coordinate cyberattacks in conjunction with important political events.

One of the tasks of this unit is to spread disinformation, either to test the public opinion as a prelude for issuing a certain decision, to headhunt activists and opponents by setting some traps that pave the way to discredit them, or to distract internet users interested in Sudanese affairs.

Since the overthrow of the National Congress regime in April 2019, the digital sphere has been flooded with dozens of websites.

As the Freedom House report for internet freedom stated, these websites are newly established and it seems that some of them belong to the security services or the Electronic Jihad Unit.

The report of the same organization for the year 2020 stated that the unit operates in offices in Khartoum, in addition to being seen in both Qatar and Turkey.

The Legal Framework Regarding Rumors in Sudan

Until the time of drafting this report, Sudanese legislation did not mention any article defining disinformation or rumors. The law was content with the term "fake news" without a clear definition, except for mentioning the phrase "knowledgeably by the perpetrator that it is not true".

The Cybercrime Act 2020, Article (24), defines the penalty for dissemination of fake news for anyone who uses means of telecommunication with imprisonment for a period not exceeding four years. The Penal Code 1991 also indicated in Article (66) that the penalty for disseminating fake news is imprisonment for a period of six months, or a fine.

Below is the Text of Article (66) of the Penal Code: "Whoever disseminates or broadcasts any piece of news, rumor, or report, knowing that it is not true, intending to cause fear or panic to the public, or threaten public safety, or belittle the sovereignty of the state, shall be punished with imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months, or a fine, or both penalties."

Below is the Text of Article (24) of Cybercrime Act: "Whoever prepares, or uses information or telecommunication network, or any of the information or telecommunication media or applications, to disseminate any piece of news, rumor or report, knowingly that it is not true, intending to cause fear or panic to the public, or a threat to public safety, quiescence, or belittle the sovereignty of the state, shall be punished with imprisonment for a period not exceeding four years."

Both texts did not define the following:
- Rumor
- Public safety
- Sovereignty of the state

These pompous phrases may lead to abuse by the authorities especially under non-democratic conditions.

Research Findings

The research has aimed to introduce some of the campaigns that were detected based on the reports of Marsad Beam.

The below mentioned campaigns can be defined as waves of wholly or partly fabricated content disseminated on a regular and organized basis, with the aim of misleading, distracting or testing public opinion towards a particular issue or incident.

## The First Campaign: Disinformation before the October 25, 2021 coup

Since October 10th, 2021, a seemingly systematic campaign has been organized on Sudanese social media, flooding it with rumors and disinformation, as certain facebook accounts exchanged a lot of misleading information and rumors that revolved around political and security issues.

On the morning of October 25th, Commander-in-Chief of Armed Forces, Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, staged a military coup against his co-rulers, the Forces of Freedom & Change. Since the coup, Marsad Beam has noted the spread of rumors and disinformation on social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

Accordingly, Beam Reports tended to analyze this phenomenon, which was troubling many observers of the situation in Sudan. In this section, the study discusses how prolusion for the coup took place by misleading public opinion, and disseminating some disinformation that may have been spread for the purpose of testing public opinion and monitoring potential reactions.

Combating disinformation and rumors and educating the Sudanese audience on how to deal with news has been the core mission of Beam Reports since its establishment. Beginning in August 2021 until the day of the military coup, Beam Reports had published 23 fact-checks, with the following results:

- 3 True
- 11 Misleading
- 9 Fabricated
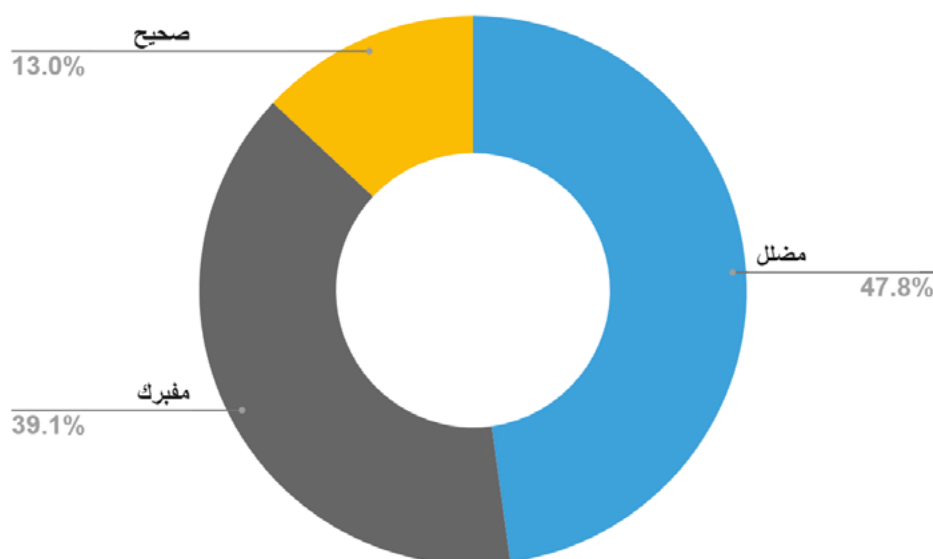
What is striking is the intensive spread of disinformation coinciding with each incident that affects the political context. For instance, when the national highway in eastern Sudan was blocked in September 2021, the public page of the media office belonging to (The Supreme Council of Beja & Independent Chiefdoms) announced on September 24, 2021 the closure of Kassala Airport.

Immediately, media platforms with millions of followers, such as the page of Al-Hadath Al-Sudani which has 1.6 million followers, and Al-Arabiya Channel, relayed the news. Al-Arabiya described this step as out of expectation.


[Beam Reports conducted](#) a fact-check and concluded that the airport is operating as per its routine plan and was never approached at all, making it misleading news.

Chronology of Disinformation That Paved the Way for the Coup:

Almost two weeks later, what apparently seemed to be a systematic plan to flood the Sudanese digital space with disinformation began, with the purpose being unknown. Beam Reports had conducted 13 fact-checks of misleading or fabricated posts that were circulated starting October 10, 2021 and up to the day of the military coup on October 25, 2021. These represent 56.5% of the total published reports by Beam Reports on rumors and misleading information in Sudan, since its inception in August 2021 until the day of the military coup.

The chart below demonstrates the amount of information circulated two weeks before the coup, and even before that period, which indicates that there is some entity intending to test the Sudanese public opinion regarding the topics and issues raised in those posts.
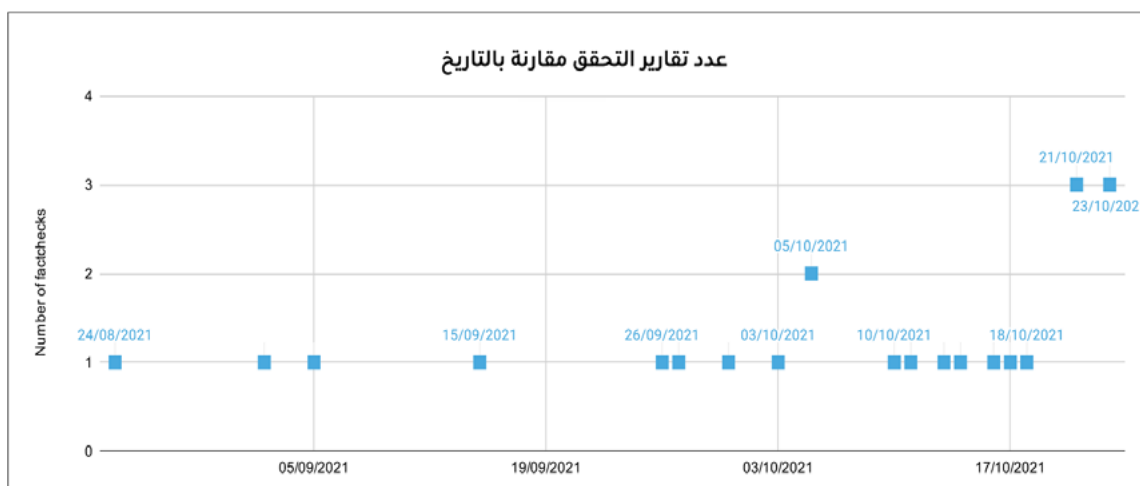
October 10, 2021:

On October 10, 2021, many pages circulated a post stating that Volker Perthes, head of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), had proposed to Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok to dissolve the government in power and form a new government with 70% of its members technocrats, in addition to retaining Maryam Sadiq Al-Mahdi and the peace agreement ministers, and reconstitute the Sovereignty Council to consist of six members, three military and three civilian non-partisans.

This post comes in light of clear turmoil among the ruling partners in Sudan at the time. However, the proposal to dissolve the government contravenes with the mandate given to the mission, and as such, the mission has no authority to indulge in such issues.

After reaching out to UNITAMS, Beam Reports concluded that the circulated post was fabricated.

October 18, 2021:

After the massive spread of the aforementioned post that included the phrase "dissolving the government" within the claim in that post, the Al-Mithaq Al-Watani (National Charter) group announced that it would organize sit-in protests in front of the Republican Palace in Khartoum, demanding the dissolution of the government.

The number of protesters in the first two days of the sit-in was large, but had soon decreased. After that, a video clip was posted, showing a convoy of trucks and claiming that it was coming from eastern Sudan and heading towards the sit-in in front of the Republican Palace in support thereof.

The most prominent page out of the ones that circulated the post is Ansar Hay'at Al-Amaliyat (Supporters of Operations Corps) which supports the dissolved Operations Corps affiliated with the National Security & Intelligence Service and owes its loyalty to the defunct regime.

* At the time of drafting this study we found that the Ansar Hay'at Al-Amaliyat page had deleted the aforementioned clip.

[Beam Reports fact-checked](#) the clip and found that it was filmed in 2019.

October 23, 2021:

Posts have spread widely among WhatsApp users about a security decision to close Khartoum International Airport. [Beam Reports found](#) that the claim was fabricated and that the airport was operating as normal.

October 23, 2021:

Several newspapers published a report that reads:

"The first reaction from Al-Burhan after 21 October..right now Al-Bashir and his coterie are being deported to The Hague. Security forces and the army cordoned the Kober area and its environs in anticipation and protection for his deportation. Copied from the page of Mr. Yasser Arman, the political advisor of the Prime Minister."

After fact-checking, [Beam Reports found](#) that the report was fabricated.

October 23, 2021:

A message circulated among users of instant messaging and social media sites stating: "A directive from the United States Embassy in Khartoum to American nationals to not leave their homes due to an expectation of a change in the leadership of the Armed Forces." [Beam Reports fact-checked](#) the content of the circulating message and found that it was fabricated.

Conclusion of the First Campaign:

Based on the above mentioned information and facts, and given the chronological sequence of events, beginning with the fabrication of a conversation between Volker Perthes and Hamdok in which Volker calls for the dissolution of the government, which is the same position that was adopted at the Republican Palace sit-in six days after the conversation's fabrication, and passing through the spreading of a video clip that misleads public opinion to show that the Republican Palace sit-in enjoys popular support, in addition to the fabrication of a message confirming the closure of Khartoum Airport, and not concluding by the fabrication of an electronic message attributed to the United States Embassy in Khartoum, warning its nationals of an expected change that will take place within the armed forces, the study concludes that the misleading content has been fabricated with the aim of exploring public opinion on the consequences of any move to bring about change in the political scene, in prelude for the coup against the transitional government.

The Second Campaign: Campaign against Sudanese-Egyptian relations

Sudan's geographical location between Ethiopia and Egypt puts it in an unenviable position, amid what looks like a cold war over water, between the upstream and downstream countries.

The crossways of interests between the two countries and Sudan - especially the ongoing conflict over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam - forced Sudan to be part of this conflict, which led to the exposure of Sudanese public opinion to many media influences.

With the outbreak of peaceful protests in the Northern State against the decision to increase electricity tariffs, which quickly turned into a multi-demand protest movement, Beam Reports monitored a misleading campaign targeting Sudan's relationship with Egypt, fabricating provocative statements by Egyptian government officials and media professionals targeting Sudan.

The campaign consisted of many posts, the authenticity of which was missing. Below are some of the reports that Beam Reports published about the disinformation in this campaign.

Many pages published a statement attributed to the Egyptian Minister of Defense describing the closure of the road linking Egypt and Sudan as " unacceptable and jeopardizes the Egyptian strategic security."

[Marsad Beam found](#) that statement to be fabricated.

Also, some pages published a statement by the Egyptian journalist Amr Adib, in which he mentions the necessity of finding an alternative to the commander of the Sudanese Armed Forces, Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan.

[Marsad Beam found](#) that statement to be fabricated.

Subsequently, an intense campaign arose aiming to spread news that Egypt was suffering billions of losses as a result of the closure of the continental road linking it to Sudan. After that, many pages published statements attributed to the Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, in which he says:

"Generating electricity from the Renaissance Dam is a big step. We will operate the factories, and at that time we need Sudan to import cotton, beans, sesame, dates, livestock and others at the global market price. Imports from Sudan may reach between 5 - 5.5 billion dollars a year." Ahmed said, according to the post, "We look forward to major deals between the two countries and trade exchange through official channels so that we can rise up."

[Marsad Beam found](#) that statement to be fabricated.

Public Response to these Campaigns:

The sympathy of part of the Sudanese public with the closure of the continental road between Sudan and Egypt, known as Taras Al-Shamal (the Northern Barricade) made them support the campaign referred to above, especially as the campaign has supported the closure of the road, and claimed that it affects the routes of smuggling of goods to Egypt.

In parallel with the spontaneous popular support, the Resistance Committees expressed their solidarity with Taras Al-Shamal which added great momentum to the movement in the northern state and influenced the acceptance of a large number of Sudanese people to what the campaign included.

The Resistance Committees are committees formed in the neighborhoods of Sudanese cities, to resist the regime of the National Congress Party. The committees' star shone during the December 2018 revolution, and they proved their capability to influence the course of events in Sudan as a result of their leadership of the anti-coup movement of October 25, 2021.

Disappearance of the Resistance Committees' content after this campaign:

After the Resistance Committees and many Sudanese interested in public affairs supported the closure of the continental road between Sudan and Egypt,

complaints showed up from users on Facebook, which included the disappearance of what they called "revolutionary content", meaning the content that deals with the events of the Sudanese revolution.

Many followers indicated that the posts of the Resistance Committees pages never appear to them, and some page admins mentioned that Facebook users had to search for their pages in order to see their content. Many of those interested accused foreign parties of seeking to block revolutionary content on Facebook.

Later, a report published by Global Voices website indicated that the reason for the disappearance of the "revolutionary content" was a cyberattack, the related evidence thereof indicates that it was launched and managed from Egypt.

The report indicated that targeting the relevance score is done by using the "Merge Pages" feature. Relevancy index is an algorithm on Facebook that prioritizes displaying content to the user according to their interests that they express through their interaction on the platform.

As for the "Merge Pages" feature, it works to merge two or more pages, and thus the followers of the merged pages are directed to follow the nascent page as a result of the forced merge without their consent. After that, the relevancy index is manipulated by publishing a large amount of posts that have nothing to do with revolutionary content. Then, the revolutionary content becomes at the bottom of the posts it displays according to the relevancy index for each user.

Conclusion of the Second Campaign:

By fabricating a statement by the Egyptian Minister of Defense threatening Sudan, fabricating a statement by the Egyptian journalist Amr Adib, and portraying that Egypt is facing billions of losses; because of Taras Al-Shamal without a document proving the validity of the claim, and fabricating a statement by the Ethiopian Prime Minister about what Sudan will gain from the Renaissance Dam, the study concluded that there is an entity that supports Ethiopia and produces hate speech towards Egypt.

On the other hand, it is trying to brighten Ethiopia's image, by promoting disinformation suggesting that Ethiopia can compensate Sudan's losses in the event that Egypt exits the Sudanese trade balance.

On the other hand, there is evidence that the cyberattack on the revolutionary content was carried out from inside Egyptian territory, indicating that there is an entity that intended to prevent the media escalation of the trend supporting the northern barricade; Taras Al-Shamal.

Accordingly, we find that the Sudanese public space exists between two sides that support its neighbors, Ethiopia and Egypt, and each of them tries to influence the public opinion by publishing disinformation or by blocking content that is not in favor of its interests.

The Third Campaign: A campaign of misleading images during the violent incidents in the area of Kreinik

In April 2022, violent incidents began in the area of Kreinik, east of El Geneina, West Darfur state. The events left 176 dead and more than 200 injured, while thousands were displaced from the region.

During the violent incidents, many Facebook pages were actively posting images claiming them to be related to the violent events in Kreinik. At that time, Marsad Beam worked to fact-check the circulating photos and found that many of these photos do not relate to these events, but rather some of them are not connected to Sudan at all.

Below we review some of the images that were fact-checked by Marsad Beam.

Screenshot showing the date the image was posted

Screenshot showing the date the image was posted

Screenshot showing the date the image was posted

Screenshot showing the date the image was posted

Meram Alamin
Yesterday at 4:19 PM · 🌐

يذكر أن جميع الحروب الي خاضها الجيش السوداني كانت ضد ابناء وطنه .. قوات بتفتش للسلطه وهم ماقادرين يحلوا قضية
ثأر شخصية وبسببهم اتحولت لحرب أهلية كل يوم بتزيد ... **#دارفور #كرينك #السودان**

Conclusion of the Third Campaign:

Adam Mahdi, an activist concerned with the situation in the Darfur region, says, "These images are often circulated by people who come from the same region that witnessed the violence - that is, local citizens -, in order to elicit sympathy from the community towards what they are suffering, and to strengthen their argument."

Mahdi points out that some of them may not have real photos, so they post photos that are not related to the events.

Mahdi also mentioned that it is possible that these images were issued by some of the parties involved in the violent incidents, in order to stir up tribal strife, with the aim of exploiting them to pass their own agenda.

Also, some people may share these images without understanding their impact on the political and security context. Again, Mahdi mentioned that the culture of image fact-checking does not exist in Sudan, and for that reason, the press repeats the same mistakes.

The Fourth Campaign: Targeting the representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in Sudan as a prelude to his expulsion

On June 3, 2020, the United Nations Security Council approved Resolution No. (2524) 2020, regarding the establishment of an integrated mission to assist the transitional period in Sudan. Volker Perthes was appointed as the representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the mission.

Since Volker first set foot in Sudan, some voices were raised opposing his arrival and justifying that as a violation of Sudanese sovereignty.

These voices quickly turned into systematic campaigns targeting Volker's presence in Sudan, especially after the Sudanese army commander, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, declared his expulsion, during his speech at the graduation of new batches from the Military College, asking him to "stop going too far in bypassing the mandate of the UN mission, by blatant interference in Sudanese affairs, and that this will lead to his expulsion from the country."

At that time, these voices took advantage of that statement to attack Volker, at times working to publish false statements and misleading information related to him, and at other times publishing news indicating his imminent expulsion from Sudanese territory.

Different platforms on Facebook have been active in different campaigns, agreeing on the same goal which is to expel Volker from Sudan. Marsad Beam has fact-checked the content of these campaigns and published several such reports, as presented below.

Campaign chronology:

March 28, 2022:

Volker directed a briefing to the UN Security Council on the human rights situation in the country and called for an end to military rule. This was after the United Nations mission (UNITAMS) had launched a process of broad consultations with the political forces and civil society in Sudan last January. Its aim was getting out of the complex political reality which was left behind by the October 25 coup.

Later, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) joined the process initiated by UNITAMS in what has become known as the "Tripartite Mechanism".

April 1, 2022:

The Commander-in-Chief of the Sudanese Armed Forces, Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, announced the expulsion of Volker during his address to the graduation ceremony of batches from the Military College, asking him to cease going beyond the mandate of the UN mission by blatant interference in Sudanese affairs, as he described it.

This statement came after Volker's briefing to the Security Council. After that, the head of the UNITAMS mission in Sudan, Volker Perthes, faced a systematic campaign of hostility by parties affiliated with the ruling military authority.

April 3, 2022:

During the debate between the political parties and their supporters on Facebook, Al-Arabiya-Sudan page published a post claiming that Volker sent a message to the Sudanese public: "You will not walk alone." The post was published during a wide debate regarding the probable expulsion of Volker by the de-facto authorities.

Later, Marsad Beam found that the content of the post attributed to Volker was part of a speech Volker had addressed to the Sudanese people in February of the same year, that is, before the beginning of the dispute between Volker and the Sudanese authorities.

Publishing an outdated statement that was first published nearly two months before the current date opens the door to the question: why does the Al-Arabiya-Sudan page publish this statement after the emergence of a rift between Volker and Al-Burhan?

April 17, 2022:

The Armed Forces newspaper published an article describing Volker as "a specialist in chaos and an expert in activating terrorist technology in Sudan," following Al-Burhan's aforementioned statement. At that time, Colonel Ibrahim al-Houri, editor-in-chief of the Armed Forces newspaper, described Volker as a "Nazi" in his commentary on the article published in the newspaper.

May 10, 2022:

A few days before the date announced by the Tripartite Mechanism for the start of the Sudanese-Sudanese dialogue, dozens of accounts and personal pages on Facebook were active in publishing and circulating a post claiming to be a leaked document from UNITAMS, of the names of those chosen by the mission to participate in the dialogue.

Marsad Beam fact-checked the post and found that it was fabricated.

June 29, 2022:

The campaign became dormant for some time until it reappeared the day before the June 30th processions, where social media users shared an image of a document containing a written letter from the Sovereignty Council, directing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to address the Security Council to withdraw Volker.
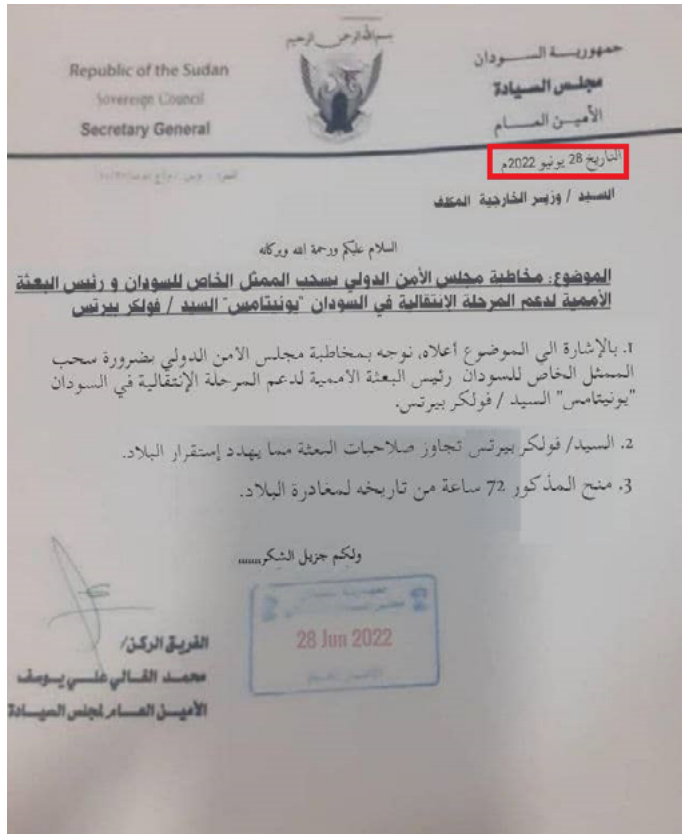
[Marsad Beam found](#) the circulating letter to be fabricated.

Conclusion of the Fourth Campaign:

Since Volker presented his briefing to the Security Council on the situation in Sudan and human rights conditions, a campaign began in which several parties, including the Sudanese Armed Forces, participated in promoting that the authorities intend to expel Volker from Sudan.

Some pages took advantage of this direction to generate and disseminate misleading information targeting Volker, portraying him as committing a blatant interference in Sudanese affairs.

This disinformation is being used to influence Sudanese public opinion, in order to pave the way for Volker's expulsion.

Also, this campaign can influence regional public opinion, especially since Al-Arabiya channel page has participated in it by republishing old statements by Volker after the start of his dispute with Al-Burhan.

Fifth Campaign: Campaigns in conjunction with the June 30th processions

Before the start of the June 30th processions of the year 2022, many Facebook pages published an image containing several decisions taken by the Khartoum State Security Committee as precautionary measures for the announced procession. Closing the bridges and shutting down the internet were among the decisions taken before the procession.

Marsad Beam found that the image circulated is old and dates back to 2020, during the lock-down.

Some Facebook pages also circulated an image of a person with some weapons and wooden boxes next to him. The photo publishers claimed that it was for one of the revolutionaries and that he was caught with 14 weapons inside a wooden box, which was ready for distribution in the June 30th processions.

Marsad Beam found this post to be "misleading".

After that, many Facebook users circulated the fabricated document to expel Volker referred to earlier.

Also, an article by a leader of the Sudanese Professionals Association, Mohamed Nagi Al-Assam, was fabricated under the title Awdat Al-Wa'i Lil Assam (Return of Awareness to Al-Assam) where it claimed that he called for preserving young people's blood and not to respond to calls for destruction. However, Al-Assam denied his connection to the article altogether in a post he published on his Facebook account.

Distraction Campaign:

A few days before the date of the June 30th processions, many pages circulated misleading information, which the study found likely to be part of an organized distraction campaign, created by supporters of the de-facto authorities to distract internet users from focusing on mobilization of the planned processions.

On June 26, the official spokesperson of the Armed Forces issued a press statement announcing the killing of seven Sudanese soldiers and a citizen at the hands of the Ethiopian army.

One day later, on June 27, many platforms published a post stating that the Armed Forces had announced the liberation of the Ethiopian settlement "Berkht", located within the lands of Al-Fashaga. Among these pages was the page Al-Arabiya-Sudan which has nearly two million followers.
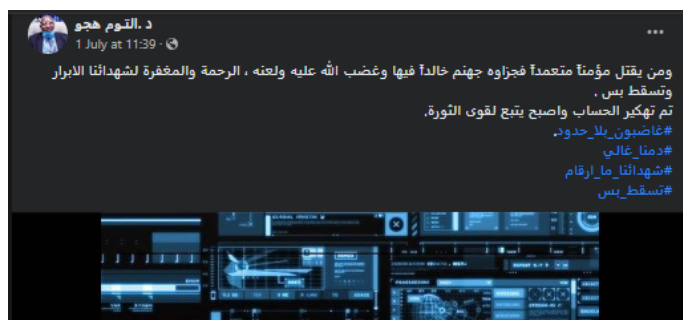
Later, the Armed Forces denied issuing any statement about the situation on the eastern borders at that time.

القوات المسلحة السودانية - الصفحة الرسمية
28 June at 19:38

Tuesday, 28 June 2022 at 19:38

#تنويه_عاجل

الثلاثاء ٢٨ يونيو ٢٠٢٢م

تواترت اليوم على بعض القنوات الفضائية والمواقع الإلكترونية أنباء عاجلة غير صحيحة ومضللة منسوبة للجيش السوداني و مصادر عسكرية عن تحركات للقوات وأسر جنود إثيوبيين بمنطقة الفشقة،

تؤكد #القوات_المسلحة_السودانية على عدم إصدارها لأي تصريحات أو بيانات لهذه القنوات أو لغيرها من المواقع الإلكترونية في أي شأن يتعلق بالموقف اليوم على حدودنا الشرقية.

كما ينوه المكتب، بأنه المصدر الوحيد المعتمد لأخبار #القوات_المسلحة_السودانية، وأن نشر أي محتوى لأي مصدر غيره تتحمل مسؤوليته وتبعاته القانونية جهة الإصدار.
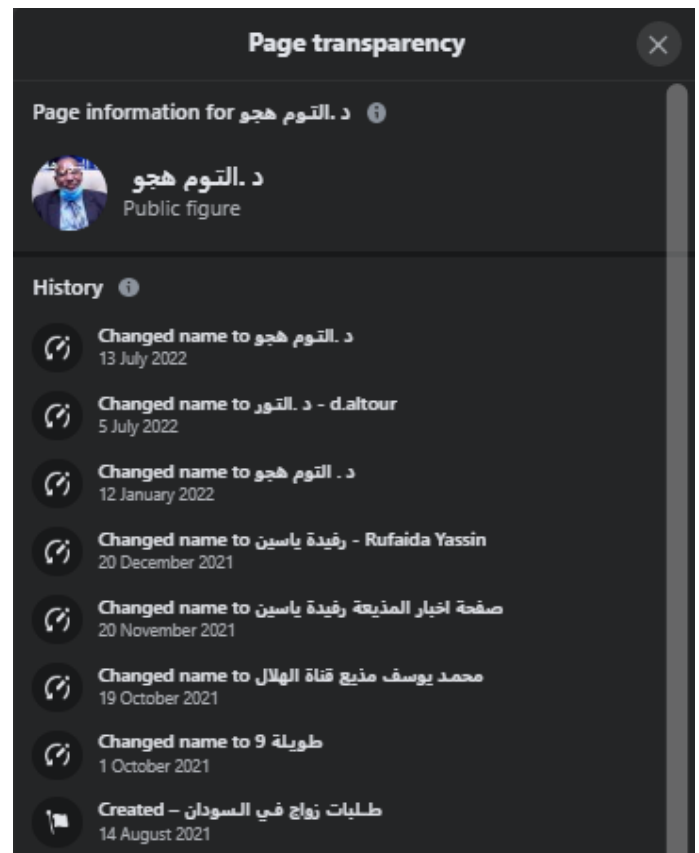
#مكتب_الناطق_الرسمي_باسم_القوات_المسلحة

Due to excessive violence, the June 30th processions left nine people dead, according to the report of the Central Committee of Sudan Doctors. The loss of life in the processions is usually followed by an almost spontaneous escalation campaign by the citizens involved in the movement, in addition to the Resistance Committees. However, due to the shutdown of the internet, many citizens were cut off from the information circulated on social networks and news websites.

After the return of telecommunication services, the Sudanese public came across many posts that may have been intended towards distracting followers from the violent events that accompanied the processions.

An advertisement appeared on a page in the name of Dr. Altoum Hajo - a politician who supports the coup - stating that it had been hacked and that it had become "affiliated with the forces of the revolution".

د .التوم هجو
1 July at 11:39

ومن يقتل مؤمناً متعمداً فجزاوه جهنم خالداً فيها وغضب الله عليه ولعنه ، الرحمة والمغفرة لشهدائنا الابرار وتسقط بس .

تم تهكير الحساب واصبح يتبع لقوى الثورة.

#غاضبون_بلا_حدود.
#دمنا_غالي
#شهدائنا_ما_ارقام
#تسقط_بس

By reference to the transparency of the page, Beam Reports found that it is not real in the first place, and does not belong to Altoum Hajo, as shown in the image below.

Page transparency

Page information for د .التوم هجو

د .التوم هجو
Public figure

History

Changed name to د .التوم هجو
13 July 2022

Changed name to د .التور - d.altour
5 July 2022

Changed name to د . التوم هجو
12 January 2022

Changed name to رفيدة ياسين - Rufaida Yassin
20 December 2021

Changed name to صفحة اخبار المذيعة رفيدة ياسين
20 November 2021

Changed name to محمد يوسف مذيع قناة الهلال
19 October 2021

Changed name to طويلة 9
1 October 2021

Created – طلبات زواج في السودان
14 August 2021

Moments later, the Sudanese people circulated a statement attributed to the Ethiopian Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, in which he said, "He who kills his people like this in cold blood only in order to rule has no right to accuse us of killing his soldiers," referring to the accusations of the Armed Forces to Ethiopia of killing eight Sudanese people. Marsad Beam found this statement to be fabricated.

"من يقتل شعبه هكذا بدم بارد فقط من اجل من يحكم لا يحق له ان يتهمنا بقتل جنوده."
– رئيس الوزراء الأثيوبي.

Conclusion of the Fifth Campaign:

Those who are following the events rest assured that there are some entities that intended to test the Sudanese public opinion and find out its trends before the mass processions on June 30th, in order to make proactive decisions for the processions.

The internet was shut down on June 30th, the day of the processions, for 24 hours, and the bridges were blocked in Khartoum State. Also, it is clear that some entities deliberately fabricated a leaflet announcing the liberation of an Ethiopian settlement in Al-Fashaga by the Armed Forces, aiming to reshuffle the priorities of the citizens by pushing public solidarity with the Armed Forces to the highest priority, and then working to downplay the importance of the civil society movement, given that the Armed Forces are engaged in a war against an external enemy.

Also, the announcement of the Dr. Altoum Hajo page being hacked on this particular day, knowing that this page is fake and does not belong to him, indicates that there is an entity working to distract followers from violations against demonstrators by creating certain events.

On the other hand, it can be observed that some forces that antagonize the army commander, Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, have worked to respond to the campaign launched to distract followers from the violations, by re-mobilizing public opinion against Al-Burhan through fabricating a statement by the Ethiopian Prime Minister.

The Sixth Campaign: Against the head of the Justice and Equality Movement, Gibril Ibrahim

Since his appointment as Minister of Finance in February of 2021, Gibril Ibrahim, Chairman of the Justice and Equality Movement, has embarked on a journey of economic adjustments in Sudan.

These amendments were supported by the transitional authority while confronted with opposition from some political and social forces.

After Al-Burhan's coup against the transitional government in Sudan, some voices began to show up, opposing what they called "Gibril Ibrahim's economic policy". These voices took advantage of popular discontent with Ibrahim because of his dependence on the country's internal resources, after the international financing institutions ceased their dealings with Sudan which affected the resources of the state treasury.

The campaign was led by Sudan Now page on Facebook and began its activities after the leak of a letter exempting the minister's nephew from the value of customs fees for his private car.

A post on Sudan Now Facebook page attributed statements to Ibrahim, indicating that he was working to set aside taxpayer money to fund armed groups' forces. Another post attributed a statement to Ibrahim in which he stated that he was about to levy a new tax fee under the name "fees to the Sudan Peace in Juba Agreement for the development of the states of Darfur."

Later, the Justice and Equality Movement denied these statements attributed to its president, describing them as fabricated.

Another post indicated that there are moves to secure the National Radio Station and Khartoum International Airport, in reference to an attempted military coup.

After more than an hour had passed since the post - that is, after people learned that there were no movements in this direction -, the same page stated that this move was not a military coup, but rather "precautions likely to be taken for fear of Gibril's forces and the armed groups surrounding the capital Khartoum, within the framework of caution against their issuance of instruction to control the country."

Beam Reports' sources confirmed that there were no forces to secure Khartoum International Airport on the aforementioned day, which denies the claim promoted by the page. Marsad Beam also found that this page publishes images and disinformation related to the activities of armed groups.

Among them are the activities of Gibril Ibrahim, where a post was spotted containing an outdated image of trucks in Central Africa, claiming that it was an image of Russian trucks smuggling gold protected by the movements of Gibril, Minnawi and the Rapid Support Forces.

Moreover, we noticed that the page works to stir up regional strife among the constituents of the Sudanese people.

For instance, the page included a video clip of a person sending a threatening message to the army commander and the Rapid Support Forces commander.

The page attached the following comment to the video: "A new rebellion in western Sudan, the Misseriya and the Hamars threaten to cut off the oil, and their leader says we want our rights in a better way or we will take them by force of arms.

The question that arises is what is the benefit of Sudan Peace in Juba Agreement if ten rebel movements have centered in Khartoum and left Darfur to build a new rebellion, and these movements only plunder the citizens of the northern regions?"

In the same context, the page shared an image of a document published by a citizen which includes confidential information that the Ministry of Finance had refused to exempt customs for a "rickshaw powered by electric power." Despite the validity of the published document, the page raised the issue along with the following question:

"Is it revenge against the northerners?"

Marsad Beam found that the citizen who published the document did not ask the above question, while the page under investigation adopted a racist approach when dealing with the post.

Conclusion of the Sixth Campaign:

It can be observed that an entity is adopting a campaign to spread hate speech among constituents of the Sudanese people, initiated by the campaign directed at the head of the Justice and Equality Movement.

The criticism was not confined to the performance of Gibril Ibrahim as Minister of Finance, but rather to his ethnic and regional affiliation, taking advantage of the popular discontent with his administration of the Ministry of Finance.

Actors in Disinformation Campaigns in Sudan:

Many local, regional and international entities use disinformation as a political weapon to pass their own agenda as a prelude for winning political, economic or military interests and gains.

Thus, media disinformation is not confined to local political interests only, but also extends to regional and international interests. Below is a revision of some local and foreign actors, according to the database of Marsad Beam, in addition to reports of international institutions and technology companies.

First: Local Actors:
- ### Entities opposing military rule:

On the 25th of October 2021, the Commander-in-Chief of the Sudanese Armed Forces, Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, staged a military coup, as a result of which the power sharing that existed between the Armed Forces and the Forces of Freedom and Change was abolished. The coup faced intense popular opposition in its early days, and soon the Resistance Committees organized processions opposing the coup.

On the other hand, the Forces of Freedom and Change were active in holding events and open sessions to discuss the consequences of the coup and its repercussions. Many political parties and bodies that opposed the coup - the Popular Congress Party and the National Movement for Building and Development, for example - were also active in issuing statements and organizing activities declaring their determined rejection of the military coup.

Marsad Beam found out that there is some misleading information circulating in the Sudanese digital space that is targeting Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan personally.

Facebook users circulated a video clip that shows the Saudi Crown Prince leaving his session with Al-Burhan, in a scene that appears to have occurred after a dispute between them. The circulation of this clip came over during Al-Burhan's visit to Saudi Arabia, in March 2022. However, Marsad Beam found that the circulating clip is old and dates back to 2019.

ما عاوزه ليها شرح

Social media users also circulated a frame image of Al-Jazeera-Sudan page containing a statement attributed to the Deputy Chief of Police and Public Security in the Emirate of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, Lieutenant General Dhahi Khalfan Tamim, commenting on the release of some members of the National Congress Party dissolved in April 2022, describing it as a "political maneuver" by Al-Burhan to put pressure on the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

Marsad Beam found that the circulated image was fabricated, as Dhahi Khalfan did not mention this on any of his personal pages, and he did not make a statement to any media outlet.

Based on the above information, it can be concluded that there are some entities opposing Al-Burhan's ruling, and deliberately spreading misleading information targeting him personally.

In June 2022, many Facebook users circulated an image of an Israeli newspaper in Hebrew, in which appeared the Sudanese army commander, Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan. The promoters of the image circulated the following claim:

"The Israeli newspapers remorsefully bid farewell to Al-Burhan, and a number of other allegations."

Marsad Beam found that this piece of news was published on February 4, 2020, the day after the Al-Burhan-Netanyahu meeting in Entebbe.

• Rapid Support Forces:

The Rapid Support Forces is a military militia that was fighting on behalf of the Sudanese government during the war in Darfur. Since 2019, it has been participating in the governance of Sudan through the participation of its leader, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, in the Sudanese Sovereignty Council to become the second man in power.

The Rapid Support Forces participated in "Operation Khartoum", launched by the European Union to cease illegal immigration in Rome in 2014, and the process was criticized in Sudan and among European public opinion. It was described as politicized and that it helped regimes that violate human rights, including the National Congress regime. However, the European Union later denied providing any logistical and technical support to the Sudanese military forces.

The Rapid Support Forces have deliberately published misleading information on social media - taking advantage of its participation in operations to combat illegal immigration and human trafficking - in order to brighten its image and remove the stigma around its reputation for human rights violations, which were documented by Human Rights Watch; committing massacres in Darfur in 2015.

Therefore, the Rapid Support Forces published a publication in which it stated that a research center called the "Center for Monitoring Conflicts in the African Coast", based in Paris, had issued a report describing the Rapid Support Forces as the forces that "played an important role in moving stagnant waters in European policy towards Sudan, and it contributed to the consolidation of cooperation between Sudan and the European Union to combat the phenomenon of illegal immigration, which threatens the lives of thousands of immigrants."

Marsad Beam published a reportage refuting the Rapid Support Forces' claim of the aforementioned center that issued the report. The reportage concluded that there is no center called the "Center for Monitoring Conflict in the African Coast", and that the name of the center is linked to a person called Mohamed Ali Kiliani who has ties to Russian media, and that the report published on the Rapid Support Forces pages is not available on the Internet.

Based on the above, it appears that the Rapid Support Forces are working to spread misleading information to polish their image.

- ## Islamic-oriented Entities:

The Facebook report for June 2021 talked about a campaign that originated in Sudan and targeted local audiences. The campaign has been linked to individuals in Sudan, including those associated with The Future for Reform and Development movement, a political party established at the end of 2019.

This network was found after reviewing information about some of its activities that researchers shared with Valent Projects, a digital agency that works on data research, digital content production, and advertising on social media.

The publications of this campaign were mainly published in Arabic on news and current events in Sudan, including support for Islamic political parties, the Muslim Brotherhood and the political orientations of the National Congress regime, support for the trend of normalizing Sudanese-Israeli relations, and criticism of the Communist Party, secularism, feminism and the transitional government which the army later turned against.

Network Details

- **Presence on Facebook and Instagram:** The network includes 53 Facebook accounts, 51 pages, 3 groups, and 18 Instagram accounts.

- **Followers:** Approximately 1.8 million accounts follow one or more pages, approximately 43,000 members of one or more groups, and approximately 8,700 followers of one or more accounts on Instagram.

- **Ads:** About $700 was spent on ads on Facebook and Instagram, paid in Turkish Lira and Saudi Riyals.

According to the report, the Future for Reform and Development movement led this campaign from inside Sudan.

Observing the screenshots above, it can be noticed that two of them contain the word "Islamic" which is an indication that the content of the pages supports the Islamic orientation in the Sudanese political context.

In April 2022, the movement joined the so-called Al-Tayyar Al-Islami Al-Areed, an alliance of many political Islamic parties and entities, including the Sudanese Islamic Movement, and the former leader of the dissolved National Congress Party, Amin Hassan Omar, signed on its behalf.

Many reports mentioned that Amin Hassan Omar is a member of the Future for Reform and Development movement, but he denied this in one of the press interviews while stressing that he was part of the dialogues that took shape in the idea of the movement before it was established.

Marsad Beam searched for the political secretary of the movement, Dr. Nagi Mustafa, and found that his name is linked to a news page called Al-Raed.

Mustafa who appears frequently on this page conducts live broadcasts from the page, and the page promotes him even in the events of his daily personal life as shown in the image below.

For more confirmation, Beam Reports found that the Future for Reform and Development movement page shared a live broadcast of Nagi Mustafa, containing Al-Raed's logo. This indicates that the two pages have an interlinked relationship.

• The Sudanese Armed Forces:

The Armed Forces use their various platforms to promote a political agenda, targeting specific political parties and groups. The official Facebook page of the Armed Forces published an article written by the editor-in-chief of the Armed Forces newspaper, Colonel Ibrahim al-Houri, in which he describes the Communist Party as "the party with a dark history and a record full of shameful crimes."

Also, the Sudanese Armed Forces intervened in the campaign to expel the representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Volker Perthes, through its newspaper "The Armed Forces".

The newspaper published that Volker has a project he would like to establish in Sudan, describing him as "an expert in chaos and activating terrorist technology in Sudan." Al-Houri described Volker as a "Nazi" in a comment on what the newspaper had published.

The publication of these press materials, and Al-Houri's comment on them, coincided with a widespread campaign on social media calling for Volker's expulsion from Sudan, promoting the idea of his interference in internal Sudanese affairs.

• The National Intelligence and Security Service:

The National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) was established in 2004, after merging the National Security Service - concerned with internal security - with the Intelligence Service - concerned with the external security of Sudan.

In 2011, the NISS established a unit called the "Electronic Jihad Unit" which is a unit that was established to monitor what is published in the digital sphere, to disseminate misleading and false information, and to clampdown on political actors and activists who oppose the rule of the National Congress Party.

After the removal of the National Congress regime, and during the transitional period, the Reporters Without Borders organization warned that the Electronic Jihad Unit is still continuing to spy on journalists and monitor them, in addition to the control of media outlets affiliated with the defunct regime over the media of the transitional period.

It also claimed that such media is working to impede this period, noting that Sudan needs to build an effective media space from scratch.

Second: Foreign Actors:

• Russia:

Numerous reports indicated that Russia is working to influence public opinion in Sudan through the use of social media. In March 2022, the Troika Group - the United States of America, Norway and the United Kingdom - issued a statement stating that the Wagner Group, a private military company closely linked to the Russian president Vladimir Putin, has been spreading disinformation on social media and engaging in illegal activities linked to gold mining. Later, the Sudanese authorities denied these allegations.

The Facebook report of May 2021 cited a network that published news in Arabic about Africa and current events in the region, including news about politics in Sudan, tensions in Chad, Ethiopia and Palestine, as well as comments supportive of Sudanese Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok and relief initiatives in Sudan, by the Russian financier Yevgeny Prigozhin. The Sudanese Ministry of Health was also criticized following allegations that the government prevented the entry of Russian aid into the country.

Network details:

- **Presence on Facebook and Instagram:** 83 Facebook accounts, 30 pages, 6 groups, and 49 accounts on Instagram.
- **Followers:** About 440,000 followers of one or more pages, about 4,300 members of one or more groups, and about 50,000 followers of one or more accounts on Instagram.
- **Ads:** About $500 spent on ads on Facebook and Instagram, paid in Qatari Riyals and US Dollars.

This network mainly targeted Sudan, and the Facebook report revealed that this activity is related to the network that was removed in October 2019 and was linked to individuals attributed to the Russian Internet Research Agency.

between August and October 2018, before the December Revolution, and many of them were actively publishing as of October 2019 and began to expand their presence to include other social media platforms such as Twitter.

These pages were generally supportive of different governments depending on the current political situation. It is noticeable that a large number of pages contained the word "radio" in the title of the page; Like "Radio Africa" which is the largest with about 356,560 followers.

As for the reports of Instagram accounts, they revealed two people; one of them is a Sudanese journalist linked to the Khartoum Star page, as it turned out that he spent some time in Russia.

The other is a musician promoted by the Royal Crew News page in its early days when it was called Royal Crew Music.

Interestingly, both the reporter and the musician have ties to Sudanese mining; where the correspondent's personal Facebook account says he is the director of public relations at the Ministry of Minerals, and the musician's personal account says he is a translator at the Russian Kush Company, a gold mining company in Sudan.

[According to the Stanford Internet Observatory report](#) of Stanford University, the Russian networks revealed by Facebook reports for October 2019 targeted a number of African countries, including Libya, Sudan, the Central African Republic, and Madagascar.

The report also disclosed that the networks are attributed to entities linked to Prigozhin and the Russian Internet Research Agency, including the Wagner Group, a Russian organization that has acted as a private military contractor in several African countries.

As for Sudan, a number of news and political pages were deleted, most of which were created

• The United Arab Emirates:

The United Arab Emirates is part of the geopolitical reality of Sudan, as they are both part of the Middle East and members of the League of Arab States (LAS).

This geopolitical reality is the base of UAE's interest in Sudan's situation, and puts it in a position of a warrior for its political interests in the region and its economic interests through its investments in Sudan.

As mentioned earlier, the crossways of interests between regional and international actors oblige them to diversify the means of political conflict, including the media war.

The UAE is known for its strong opposing stance against the Muslim Brotherhood which was ruling in Sudan and Egypt. Therefore, parties advocating for the UAE used Twitter to spread misleading information and to promote the UAE's positive role in Sudan.

Mark Owen Jones, an assistant professor at Hamad Bin Khalifa University in Qatar and an expert in the field of disinformation, published a series of tweets in which he explained that 26 Twitter accounts are working to promote the positive role of the UAE in Sudan, and they sometimes criticize the Muslim Brotherhood.

أنرقت عاطف
@mega_anchbangct

اساس الارهاب في بلادي ووراء ما يحدث في السودان هم جماعة الاخوان هم جماعات الشر في جميع دول العالم و يسعون وراء نشر افكارهم المتطرفه

Translated from Arabic by Google

The basis of terrorism in my country and behind what is happening in Sudan are the Brotherhood. They are evil groups in all countries of the world and they seek to spread their extremist ideas.

@8LDqSV3kqRoDOLm · Jan 12
انا مواطنة مصرية أرفض الإنقلاب العسكرى فى مصر كما أرفض أى إنقلاب فى جميع الدول العربيه تونس، ليبيا، الجزائر، اليمن، الجزيره العربيه، السودان فلابد من وقفه للشعوب العربية للتصدى لهؤلاء المنقلبين على، شرعية الشعوب.
الحرية حق ينتزع ولا يوهب
#ربيع_عربي_واحد
#تيار_الأمة

أورا محمد
@binalafdin

الامارات والسودان..علاقات تاريخية ومواقف ثابتة، وتبحثا في تعزيز التعاون وتبادل التجارب والخبرات في مجال الأمن، لدعم مسيرة التعاون بين البلدين الشقيقين كما ترحب السعودية والإمارات والولايات المتحدة وبريطانيا بإطلاق مشاورات بين الأطراف السودانية لحل الأزمة في البلاد

Translated from Arabic by Google

The UAE and Sudan.. historical relations and stable positions, and they are looking to enhance cooperation and exchange experiences and expertise in the field of security, to support the process of cooperation between the two brotherly countries. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, the United States and Britain also welcome the launch of consultations between the Sudanese parties to resolve the crisis in the country

أميرة س بربك
@johnnyreb126

العلاقات الاماراتية السودانية متأصلة و متجزرة منذ عقود لذلك تسعى دائما دولة #الامارات الى مساعدة الشعب السودانى و تقديم الدعم له و تبادل التعاون المشترك بين البلدين و تحقيق النجاح فى كل المجالات التى تعود بالنفع على كلا من الشعبين.
#السودان

Translated from Arabic by Google

The Emirati-Sudanese relations are rooted and rooted for decades, so the #الامارات country always seeks to help the Sudanese people, provide them with support, exchange joint cooperation between the two countries, and achieve success in all areas that benefit both peoples.
#السودان

اعتكاف احمد
@sweetveinjee

جماعة الاخوان المسلمين واعوان المخلوع البشير هم من
أخذوا حقوقنا امام اعيننا وهم وراء كل ما يحدث في السودان
لذلك لا بد من إيقافهم فهم من يفتحون ابواب النهب والسلب
لموارد الشعب السوداني

Translated from Arabic by Google

The Muslim Brotherhood and the ousted Bashir's aides are the ones who took our rights before our eyes and they are behind everything that is happening in Sudan, so they must be stopped. They are the ones who open the doors of looting and robbery of the Sudanese people's resources

• Egypt:

The Arab Republic of Egypt is the northern neighbor of the Republic of Sudan, and the border length between them is 1,276 km. The eastern part of the border, or what is known as the "Halayib Triangle", is subject to a dispute between the two countries.

Egypt's economic interests in Sudan, in addition to its security reservations regarding political changes, placed it in the midst of a wave of disinformation following the removal of the National Congress regime.

It is not surprising that institutions or entities that advocate for Egyptian interests interfere in the Sudanese digital sphere. In June 2019, a campaign led by an Egyptian company advocated military rule in Sudan, following the dispersal of sit-ins in the cities of Sudan.

According to the New York Times, the company which is owned by a former Egyptian army officer led a campaign targeting Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Telegram by writing content supportive of the military rule in Sudan. However, Marsad Beam was unable to independently fact-check this claim.

Also, a campaign to hide revolutionary content, based in Egypt, arose due to the coinciding interests of the Resistance Committees and the disinformation campaign that directed its hostility towards Egypt.

- ## Ethiopia:

Ethiopia borders Sudan from the east, and the length of the common border between the two countries is about 1,600 km. There is a border dispute between Sudan and Ethiopia regarding the Al-Fashaga region and another regarding the Renaissance Dam.

As mentioned earlier, it turned out that there are entities using Facebook to draft content that promotes misleading information about Egypt, in order to influence Sudanese public opinion regarding some issues that affect the course of Sudanese-Egyptian relations.

For example, Marsad Beam has followed posts on Facebook of a page called "اثيوبيا - Ethiopia", which has more than 374,000 followers and defines itself as follows:
"Our mission is to work to raise awareness to promote Ethiopia's interests in the Arab world, amplify the Arab world's confidence and interests in Ethiopia, solidify relations and development, build long-term relations between Ethiopia and other countries, adopt and defend Ethiopian issues, reflect the Ethiopian point of view and counter smear campaigns Ethiopia is exposed to in the media politically, economically and socially."

Any keen follower of the page notes that it actively publishes posts that work to mobilize the public opinion of its followers from the Nile Basin countries - meaning here Sudan and South Sudan, being Arabic speakers - towards advocating the Renaissance Dam project.

It also publishes a discourse narrating that Egypt enjoys the Nile waters alone, to the exclusion of the rest of the Nile Basin countries.

Also, the page only publishes positive news about Sudan and promotes brotherhood between the peoples of the two countries, while it publishes negative news about Egypt and promotes hate speech towards it.
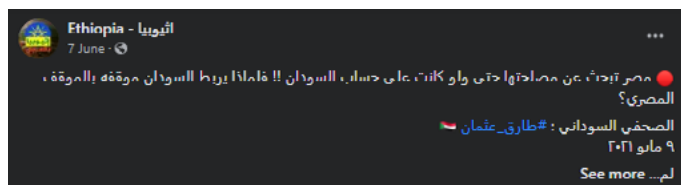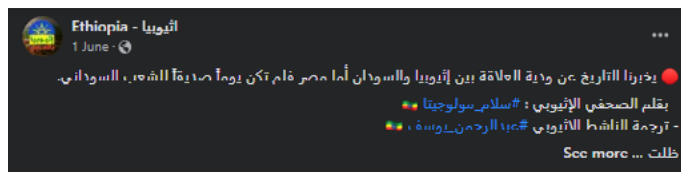
Tools Used in Disinformation Processes:

To spread disinformation in the Sudanese digital space, disinformation makers use several tools that contribute to deceiving followers.

The tools used in the Sudanese context are reviewed below:

1. **Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior - CIB:**

Facebook defines coordinated inauthentic behavior as "coordinated efforts to manipulate public debate to achieve a strategic goal through fake accounts." According to many reports, there are many networks and campaigns actively applying coordinated inauthentic behavior in the Sudanese digital sphere on Facebook and Twitter to influence public opinion in the political context.

2. **Fabrication of Documents:**

Sometimes fake government documents are published on social media platforms. The content of these documents is usually related to unannounced government decisions, or they are presented as evidence against corrupt people, or as security and military decisions. For instance, a document containing a decision to expel the representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in Sudan, Volker Perthes, was fabricated.

3. **Publishing Outdated Images:**

Those who create misleading information directed to the Sudanese audience usually rely on posting old photos, during certain events, especially during major demonstrations and armed conflicts.

4. **Publishing Outdated News:**

The recycling of outdated news that had generated momentum during its first publication, is taking place, apparently as part of distracting public opinion from current political events.

For instance, pages on Facebook circulated a post stating that the Community Security Court issued a decree to deport a girl of Italian nationality who contracted AIDS because she was targeting young people. Later, Marsad Beam found that this piece of news is old and dates back to 2013.

5. **Publishing Outdated Videos:**

Those who create misleading information directed to the Sudanese audience often publish outdated video clips during certain events.

For instance, many pages published a video clip accompanied by a claim indicating that the vehicles in the clip are heading to support the Republican Palace sit-in, which supports the October 25, 2021 coup. Marsad Beam found that the aforementioned clip is outdated, first published in 2019.

Many pages also published a video clip of military artillery with a claim that the content of the clip documents an attack carried out by the Sudanese Armed Forces against Ethiopia. Marsad Beam found that the aforementioned clip dates back to 2020.

6. **Fabrication of Images:**

Image fabrication is one of the common tools used by disinformation makers in Sudan. One of the earliest examples of this is the fabrication of a sentence on a banner carried by a girl during a demonstration. Marsad Beam found the sentence written in the banner to be fabricated.

7. Fabrication of Video Clips:

Fabrication of video clips is not common as a means of disinformation in the Sudanese digital sphere, due to the difficulty of this task, in addition to its exorbitant financial cost.

Marsad Beam observed only two cases in the midst of the huge amount of disinformation circulating, one of which was a video clip showing a bank statement containing millions of dollars belonging to Maryam Sadiq Al-Mahdi, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Marsad Beam found that the aforementioned clip was fabricated.

8. Hashtag Spamming:

Misleading hashtags is a method based on the principle of repeating the same hashtag with variable contents, with the aim of fixating a stereotype image in the audience's mind to advocate for a particular cause.

Misleading hashtags promote spam, which can sometimes be unsolicited false promotional content. We may describe hashtags as "misleading" when they are repeated in a systematic and organized manner.

In the Sudanese political context, Marsad Beam found that the aforementioned "Ethiopia" page uses this method on its Twitter account.

The page was checked on Facebook, and no results came up. It was noticed at the time that the page has blocked sharing the location of its admins but published its account's address on Twitter.
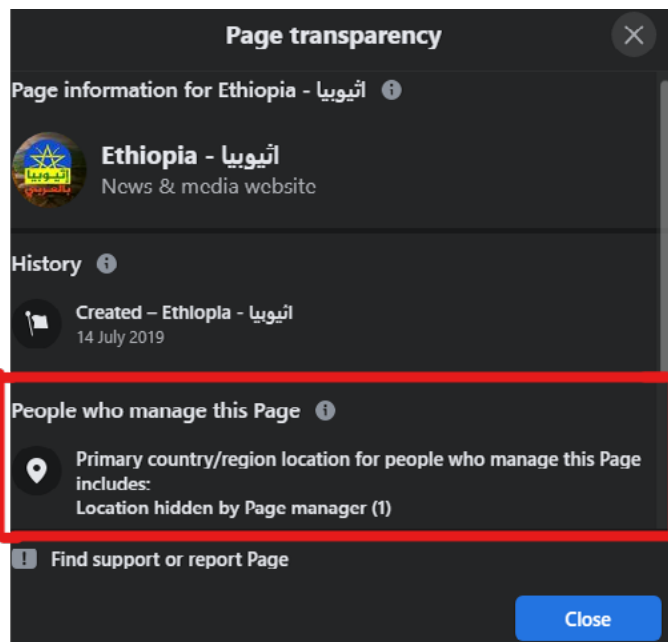
By verifying the page's account on Twitter via the platform 'Ush Al-Haqiqa (Nest of Truth), it was found out that there is a 60% chance that its administration is automated.

Also, the platform defines this account as "**a generator of random content**" or what is known as spam.
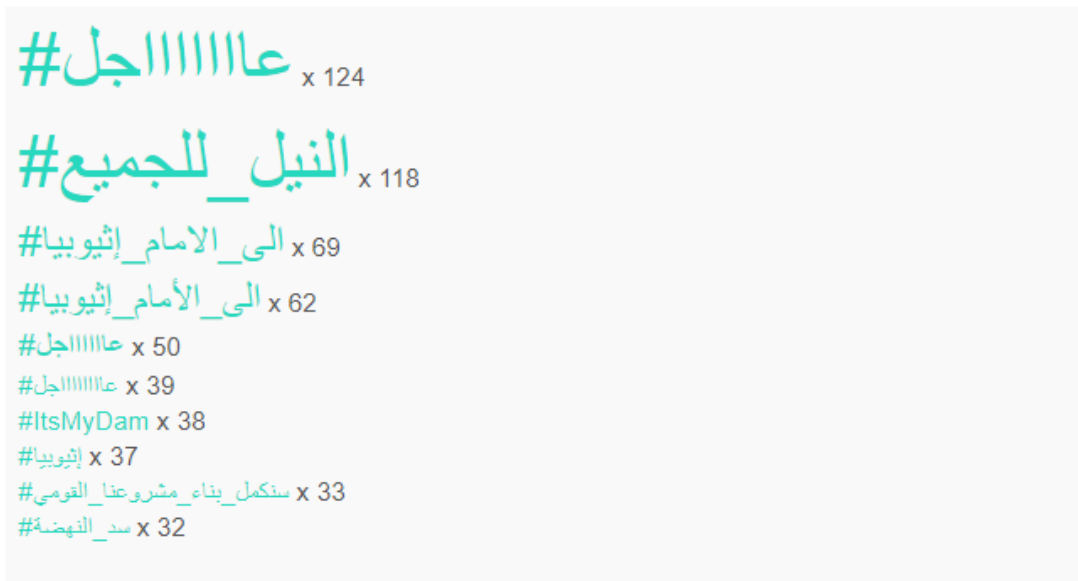
The page published propaganda campaigns that advocate for the Renaissance Dam and its repercussions by applying misleading labels.

The page published the hashtag #النيل_للجميع (Nile for all) on Twitter in 118 tweets, and this number represents 33.5% of the number of tweets published by the page since its establishment.

This information indicates that the page deliberately published this hashtag to send a message to its followers stating that Ethiopia defends its water security, and that it has the right to take its share of the Nile water like the rest of the beneficiary countries.

However, the page fell short of mentioning the conventions related to the Nile water, which regulate the utilization of its water resources.

** This number is dated July 20, 2022.

#عاااااجل x 124

#النيل_للجميع x 118

#الى_الامام_إثيوبيا x 69

#الى_الأمام_إثيوبيا x 62

#عاااااجل x 50

#عااااااجل x 39

#ItsMyDam x 38

#إثيوبيا x 37

#سنكمل_بناء_مشروعنا_القومى x 33

#سد_النهضة x 32

Methods of Disseminating Disinformation:

- **Creating Fake Pages and Changing Their Identity Later:**

One of the methods of spreading disinformation in Sudan is by creating a page presenting content that is satirical and irrelevant to political events. After that, the page changes its identity, including the name and photo, and turns into a news platform page after collecting the largest possible number of followers, and then it begins spreading misleading information.

Example (1):

The aforementioned Al-Raed page used this method in order to gather followers and then spread misleading information in the Sudanese digital space.

Al-Raed page was previously called "Sudan Satellite Channel" in 2020, then its name changed to Al-Raed in 2021. The page started operating by publishing misleading information and satirical posts, as shown below:

As mentioned earlier, Al-Raed's page relates to Nagi Mustafa, the political secretary of the Future for Reform and Development movement, which is affiliated with the Al-Tayyar Al-Islami Al-Areed alliance. The page transparency report shows that the page is run by four admins based in Turkey.
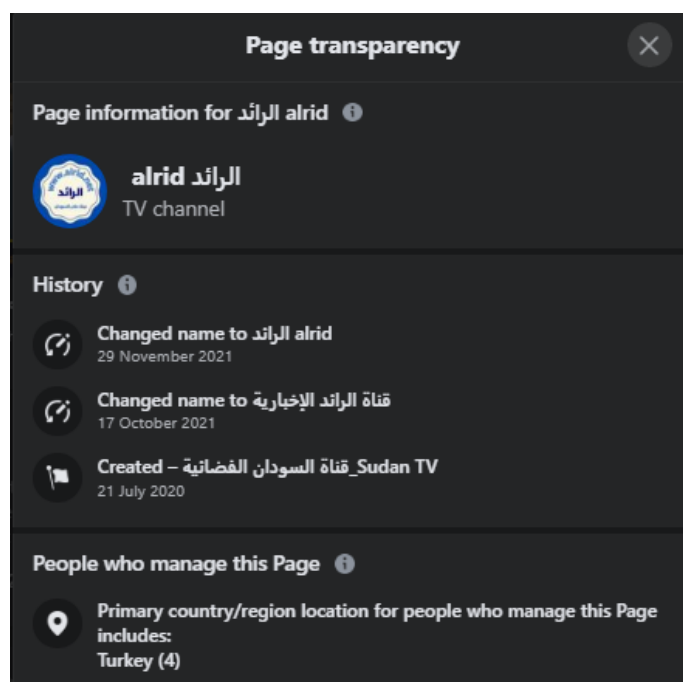
• **Publishing on Renown Platforms:**

Spreading disinformation through well-known platforms is one of the methods used to mislead the Sudanese audience.

Sometimes this work may not be systematic or affiliated with a particular system or campaign, but the publication of information by prominent media platforms, without fact-checking its authenticity, greatly contributes to its wide-spread.

Example (1):

The "Sudania 24" channel's page participated in publishing outdated news dating back to the year 2013, regarding the deportation of the foreign Italian girl from Sudan.

Example (2):

As mentioned earlier, the Al-Arabiya-Sudan page published an outdated statement by Volker Perthes, the representative of the United Nations Secretary-General in Sudan, amid a campaign calling for his expulsion from Sudan.

• **Exploiting Pages Created for an Old Purpose by Changing Their Identity:**

One of the methods of disseminating disinformation in Sudan is to exploit a page previously created for a specific campaign or purpose, by changing its identity where the target page has a large number of followers.

The name, visual identity and data of the page are changed, and then its admins publish the misleading information, after changing its name to that of a news platform suggesting that it is professional.
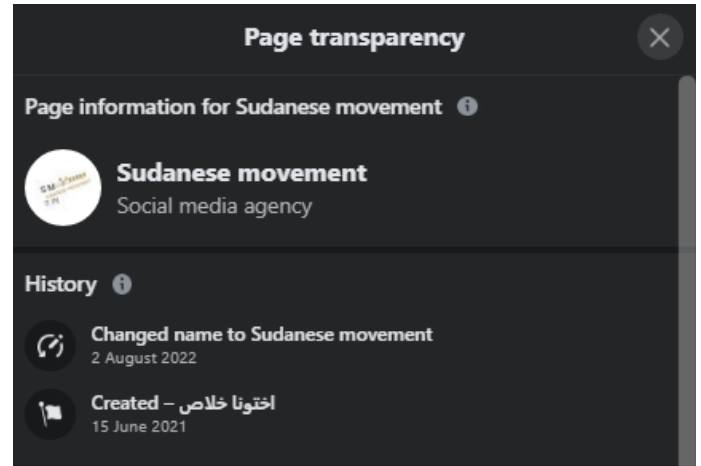
As an example, Beam Reports previously spotted misleading information on a page called Ain Al-Watan.

When reviewing the page's transparency report, it was found that it was established in June 2021, under the name "Al-Hamla Al-Sudaniya Li-waqf Al-Inhiyar - Akhtoona" (Sudanese Campaign to Stop the Collapse – Leave Us Alone).

The campaign Akhtoona is one that arose during the transitional period calling for an end to the rule of the transitional government, before its agreed end date. A few days after the October 25 coup, the name of the page was changed to "Ain Al-Watan".
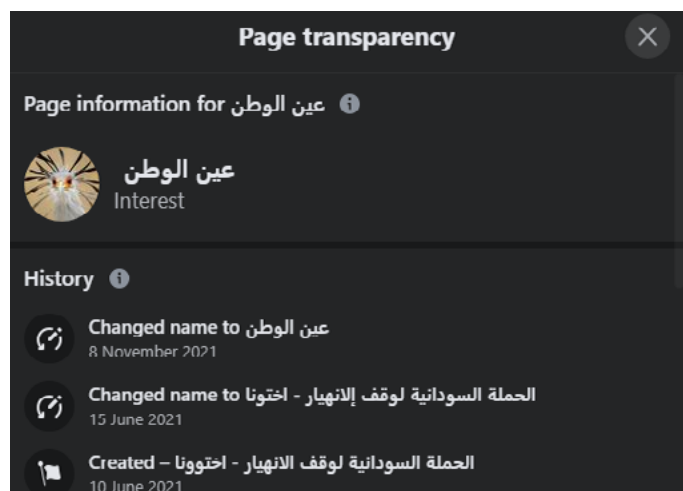
Sometimes, the page publishes posts related to the history of the Islamic Movement which ruled Sudan for thirty years.

Page transparency

Page information for Sudanese movement ⓘ

Sudanese movement
Social media agency

History ⓘ

Changed name to Sudanese movement
2 August 2022

اختونا خلاص – Created
15 June 2021

The page publishes misleading information and video clips taken out of context, targeting some personalities affiliated with the Forces of Freedom and Change.

In another example, which is also related to the Akhtoona campaign, we found a page called "Sudanese movement", created in June 2021 under the name Akhtoona khalas, i.e. at the same time that the above page was created.

The Agendas of the Disinformation Industry in Sudan:

1. Political Agendas:

The political crossways of local actors put them in front of a test that leads them to follow many methods and tools to gain new grounds in the political sphere.

Spreading misleading information contributes a lot to influencing the public opinion of the Sudanese audience. Disinformation is usually spread to get people to adopt a particular political stand, to promote a particular political figure or to discredit another fellow.

On the other hand, regional and international powers are actively engaged in spreading disinformation in Sudan, according to their geopolitical interests.

2. Security Agendas:

There is no doubt that the mainstay of security work is the provision and analysis of information, and with the development of technology and communications, and the expansion of social media, the process of collecting information has become easier, but it requires more effort to fact-check in addition to technical know-how.

By virtue of the analysis mentioned in the first campaign's summary, regarding the disinformation spread before the October 25, 2021 coup, it becomes clear that the campaign arose with the purpose of testing public opinion, regarding the consequences of any move aimed at bringing about a change in the political scene, in prelude for the coup against the transitional government.

3. Ideological Agendas:

Sudan abounds in a society of diverse customs and cultures. This diversity has created a fertile land for Sudan to receive many different faiths, and these ideologies are used as a justification for many political crimes.

And just as ideology leads to political crime, it directs some to generate and spread disinformation, to advocate their own beliefs or even to undermine the beliefs of others.

An example of generating disinformation for ideological reasons is the association of the Future for Reform and Development movement with a disinformation campaign targeting the Communist Party, secularism and feminism, as these tendencies are considered hostile to Islam in the movement's view.

4. Personal Ambitions:

The dissemination of misleading information can bring its owner financial or intangible returns, directly and indirectly, whether through direct payment for the dissemination of disinformation as a service, or through achieving societal gains by creating a network of relationships with contributors to, and those influencing policy-making.

5. Reputation Laundering:

Reputation laundering is a term that means transforming the tarnished image of a country, institution, or person, through various public relations activities, into a polished image, free from adverse effects suffered as a result of its activities, which is part of a major process carried out by public relations companies.

Reputation laundering is propaganda, although it is carried out by public relations companies and various means are used in it, including the means of journalistic work.

However, like any propaganda, it is usually of unknown origin and uses devious methods to change attitudes, opinions and ideas.

In Sudan, the Rapid Support Forces works to brighten up its tarnished reputation, due to its accusation of committing crimes in Darfur, in addition to the accusations of participating in the crime of dispersing the Military Headquarters sit-in in Khartoum in 2019.

The Rapid Support Forces follows the method of spreading misleading information; to polish its reputation in the minds of its own followers.

Prominent Pages and Accounts Whose Activity in Spreading Misleading Information Was Monitored:

Since the start of Marsad Beam's efforts to fact-check the information spread in the Sudanese digital space, Beam Reports worked to publish the titles of pages that disseminate misleading information on a frequent and semi-periodic basis, as part of Marsad Beam's reports. The list below contains samples of the most prominent of these pages:

SN	Page Title	No. of Followers
1	السودان الآن Sudan now now changed to «Al-Hakim Al-Sudan»	479,000
2	الخبر السريع - Quick News	354,842
3	سلمى | Salma (Twitter)	294,000
4	أنصار هيئة العمليات	233,000
5	دارفور نيوز Darfur News	189,684
6	سودانيز بوست Sudanese Post	135,000
7	Elmasar News	110,646
8	لواء الردع الالكتروني	85,000
9	عين الوطن Ain-Alwatan	68,823
10	تهاني الامين – Tahani al-Amin	66,000
11	Sudanibook	57,678
12	جرن الأخبار Gurn News	35,556
13	وزارة الداخلية السودانية Ministry of Interior in Sudan (fake page)	32,000
14	تسعة 9 طويلة	16,460
15	تهراقا حمد النيل	13,000

Conclusion:

It is clearly observed that disinformation is abundant in the Sudanese digital sphere. Despite the primitiveness of the tools and means used in creating and disseminating disinformation, they succeed in reserving a space of time in the Sudanese digital space which leads to achieving the goal of creating disinformation.

That is, to create an impact on the audience so that the misleading information is republished by all available means, whether using the internet or through traditional communication methods.

It is also observed that some entities that advocate for foreign interests are involved in spreading disinformation in the Sudanese digital sphere. Such entities are working to pass a specific agenda indirectly by broadcasting speeches directing public opinion against the foreign agenda.

Thus, they turn the social media sphere in Sudan into areas for conflict between regional and international strategies. Likewise, misinformation is used to polish the image of some personalities and institutions with poor human rights records. Disinformation is also used to campaign against certain concepts, such as feminism, secularism, and communism.

There remain many problems related to information fact-checking processes in the Sudanese media and digital sphere, including that the official and documented sources of information in Sudan are weak, and that government sources of news are also involved in spreading rumors and misleading information, and that verified news, government accounts and public figures accounts in social media platforms are few.

Recommendations:

Our advice to media organizations and media professionals is to train press and media cadres in the field of disinformation and fact-checking.

As for civil society organizations, they must fact-check the information published in relevant spaces before adopting it as reliable information to be included in humanitarian and human rights reports. Publishing information without fact-checking its validity leads to a future loss of the value of reports, in addition to a loss of credibility and trust in the organization.

As for the visitors of social media sites, not rushing to share information and content published on the Internet before fact-checking its authenticity is very important. Fact-checking the authenticity of content is done by requesting verification from verification platforms such as Beam Reports, or through official communication channels with the government and private sectors.

Our advice to the authorities is to facilitate access to information, according to the Right to Information Act of 2015. Ease of access to information facilitates the fact-checking process for citizens and interested parties, which forms a cover that protects the public sphere from misleading and false information, thus reducing the spread of rumors.

![Beam Reports logo]

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