

**House Foreign Affairs Committee
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission**

Briefing on

One Year After the Fall of El-Fasher: How Transnational Networks Finance Crimes in Sudan

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2—3 p.m. ET

STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

Submitted by:

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

Cochairs and Members of the Commission,

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) is an independent, nonprofit organization that promotes press freedom worldwide and defends the right of journalists to report the news safely and without fear of reprisal. CPJ submits this statement on press freedom conditions in Sudan, where more than three years of war between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have devastated the country's independent press.

Journalists have been [subjected](#) to grave violations, including killings, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and sexual violence. Meanwhile, media outlets have been [attacked](#), and communications disruptions have severely restricted civilians' access to independent information. To date, CPJ has confirmed that [16 journalists](#) have been killed in Sudan in connection with their work.

These violations are unfolding in a conflict sustained by transnational networks providing Sudan's warring parties with weapons, financing, personnel, training, and other forms of support. These transnational networks have strengthened the warring parties' military capabilities and helped prolong a war in which journalists documenting atrocities face grave risks to their safety.

Press Freedom in Sudan

Since fighting erupted in April 2023, CPJ has documented an escalating pattern of violence against journalists in Sudan. The RSF has detained and [forcibly disappeared journalists](#), [occupied media facilities](#) and [journalists' homes](#), and subjected journalists to [torture and sexual violence](#). The SAF and SAF-aligned forces have also [arrested and prosecuted](#) journalists, including on [charges](#) of collaborating with the RSF, and used cybercrime and other laws to punish critical reporting.

The siege and capture of El-Fasher [illustrate](#) the severity of the crisis. For approximately 18 months before the RSF captured the North Darfur capital on October 26, 2025, journalists

continued reporting amid bombardment, starvation, displacement, and severe communications restrictions. CPJ [documented](#) cases of journalists eating animal feed to survive and keep working, as well as detention, torture, and sexual violence against members of the press.

In early October 2025, radio journalist [Alnor Suleiman Alnor](#) died from injuries sustained when an RSF drone struck his home in El-Fasher. As El-Fasher fell, RSF fighters detained freelance journalist [Muammar Ibrahim](#) as he attempted to flee the city. Video footage showed Ibrahim identifying himself as a journalist to the fighters surrounding him. His whereabouts remain unknown. RSF fighters also reportedly executed Sudan News Agency journalist [Taj al-Sir Ahmed Suleiman](#) and his brother in their home following the city's takeover.

Arbitrary detention has continued elsewhere in Darfur. On February 28, 2026, the RSF detained three women journalists from Nyala Radio — [Ishraqah Abdulrahman](#), [Zahraa Muhammad al-Hassan](#), and [Mawaheb Ibrahim](#) — in South Darfur and held them for more than six months without due process. During their detention, CPJ received reports that the journalists had lost significant weight and suffered from fever and other health complications amid inadequate medical care. All three were released in September 2026.

The war has also forced journalists into [internal displacement or exile](#) and has dismantled much of Sudan's [media infrastructure](#). Those still working inside Sudan face insecurity, shortages, unreliable telecommunications, and threats from armed actors. Disruptions to the internet and telecommunications networks have [created](#) information vacuums in areas where independent documentation is most urgently needed.

These attacks have consequences far beyond press freedom. Sudanese journalists document killings, displacement, sexual violence, hunger, and other potential violations of international law in places international media and investigators often cannot reach. When Sudanese journalists are killed, detained, displaced, or prevented from reporting, crimes against civilians become harder to verify independently, and evidence essential to future accountability can be lost.

Transnational Networks Fueling Sudan's War

Sudan's press freedom crisis cannot be separated from the transnational networks sustaining the conflict. In 2026, the United Nations Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan [found](#) reasonable grounds to believe that a transnational network supplied the RSF with weapons, logistics, training, and foreign personnel, including Colombian military contractors with expertise in advanced weapons and drone systems. The Fact-Finding Mission also [found](#) that individuals and entities operating from, registered in, or linked to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) played a "significant role" in networks that recruited, financed, transported, and deployed foreign military contractors and provided military-related support benefiting the RSF. The UAE, however, has [denied](#) providing military support to the RSF.

Other independent investigations have documented how these networks operate across borders. Human Rights Watch [found](#) evidence that Colombian contractors, recruited through a Colombia-based company working with an Abu Dhabi-based security company, transited through the UAE and trained at military facilities there before being deployed to Sudan,

including alongside the RSF around El-Fasher. In December 2025, the U.S. Department of the Treasury [sanctioned](#) a Colombian-led transnational network, composed primarily of Colombian nationals and companies, that, according to Treasury, recruits former Colombian military personnel and trains soldiers, including children, to fight for the RSF.

Foreign weapons have also flowed to multiple parties to the conflict. Amnesty International has [identified](#) recently manufactured weapons and military equipment in Sudan originating from China, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, the UAE, and Yemen. Meanwhile, the Fact-Finding Mission has [reported](#) evidence that foreign-supplied systems have expanded the SAF's drone capabilities.

The armed actors benefiting from transnational support include the same forces CPJ has documented killing, detaining, threatening, and otherwise targeting journalists. Weapons, financing, personnel, and logistical support allow those actors to sustain a conflict in which journalists and other civilians continue to pay an extraordinary price.

Attacks on journalists enable impunity. By silencing those documenting atrocities against civilians, perpetrators evade scrutiny and make evidence harder to obtain. Efforts to disrupt the transnational networks sustaining Sudan's war should therefore go hand in hand with protecting the Sudanese journalists documenting its consequences.

Recommendations for the U.S. Congress

CPJ urges the U.S. Congress to consider the following recommendations:

- 1. Press for accountability for attacks on journalists, including through targeted sanctions against individuals and entities credibly implicated in such abuses, including killings, arbitrary detention, torture, enforced disappearance, and sexual violence.**
- 2. Protect Sudanese journalists and independent media by providing funding for emergency assistance, safe relocation, protective equipment, secure communications, and other support for journalists inside Sudan and in exile.**
- 3. Increase scrutiny of transnational networks sustaining the conflict by pressing the U.S. administration to identify and disrupt financial, commercial, logistical, recruitment, and arms-supply networks supporting parties responsible for grave abuses against journalists and other civilians.**
- 4. Support independent investigations and evidence preservation by maintaining U.S. political and financial backing for the Fact-Finding Mission and other accountability mechanisms investigating violations in Sudan, including attacks on journalists.**

Sudanese journalists have continued reporting on the civil war despite killings, detentions, displacement, sexual violence, hunger, and other grave threats. They provide critical independent evidence from places that international investigators and journalists rarely reach. Protecting Sudanese journalists and confronting the transnational networks that sustain forces responsible for grave abuses are both essential to durable civilian protection and accountability in Sudan.