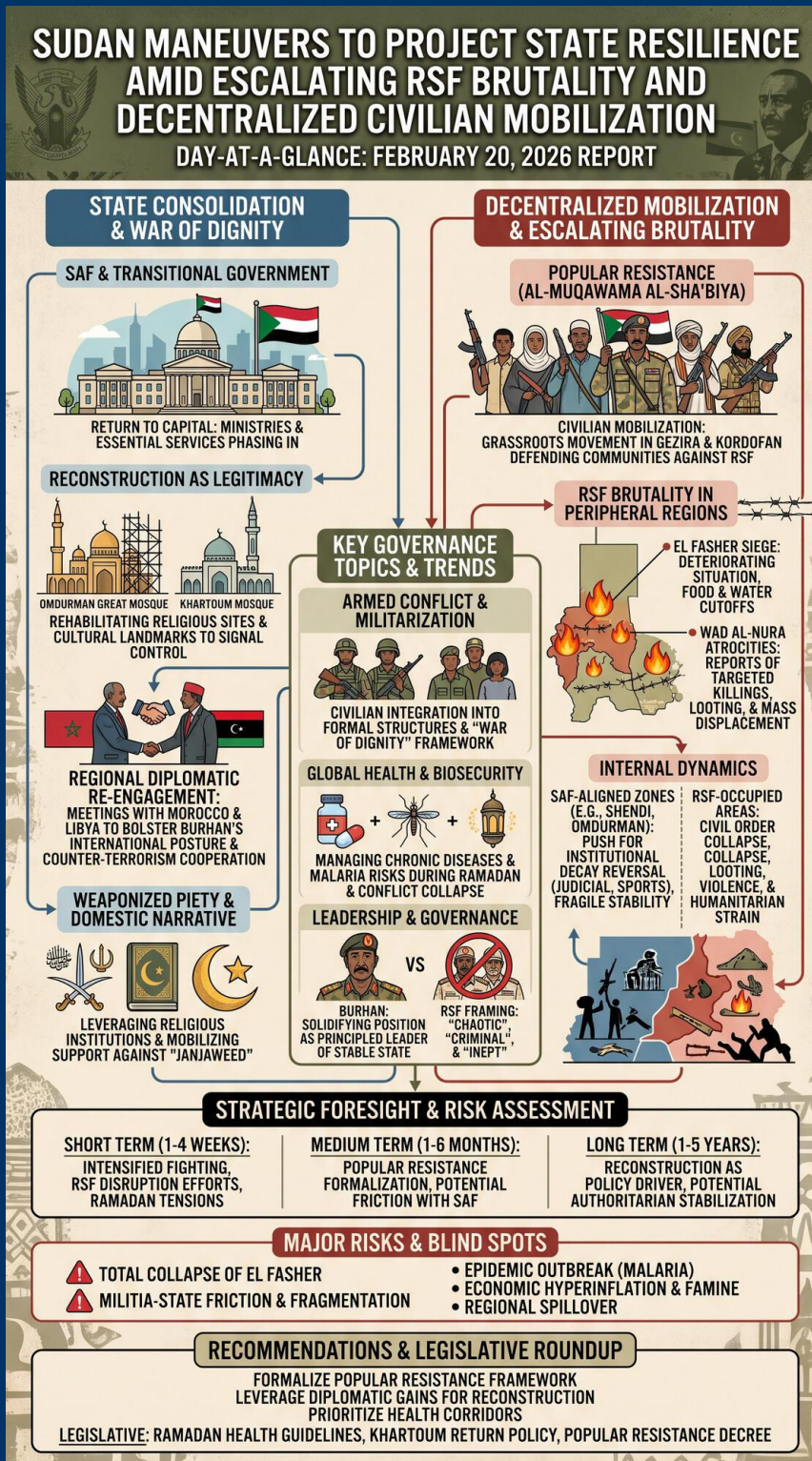


# TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

## SUDAN

FEBRUARY 20, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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### SUDAN MANEUVERS TO PROJECT STATE RESILIENCE AMID ESCALATING RSF BRUTALITY AND DECENTRALIZED CIVILIAN MOBILIZATION.

#### DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

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The Sudanese media landscape on February 20, 2026, is dominated by a concerted effort by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the transitional government to project an image of returning stability and state legitimacy. This is primarily framed through the narrative of the "War of Dignity" (Harb al-Karama), which emphasizes military progress in Omdurman and the phased return of government functions to the capital, Khartoum. High-profile diplomatic engagements with Morocco and Libya serve to bolster the international posture of the Burhan-led Sovereignty Council, portraying it as the sole competent authority capable of managing the nation's reconstruction and security challenges. However, this projection of strength is sharply contrasted by reports of ongoing, brutal insurgencies in Gezira and Darfur, particularly the siege of El Fasher and reported atrocities in Wad Al-Nura.

Domestic narratives are heavily saturated with "weaponized piety" as the country prepares for Ramadan. The SAF is leveraging religious and cultural institutions, such as the rehabilitation of major mosques in the capital and the mobilization of the "Popular Resistance" (Al-Muqawama al-Sha'biya), to solidify public support against the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), consistently referred to as the "Janjaweed" or "terrorist militias." Concurrently, the state is addressing public health crises, particularly malaria and diabetes management during fasting, indicating a shift toward managing internal governance despite the active conflict. The convergence of military mobilization, diplomatic outreach, and social health management suggests a regime attempting to transition from survival to active governance, even as significant portions of the country remain under siege or humanitarian duress.

#### MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

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##### SAF Consolidation and Khartoum Reconstruction

- The Sovereignty Council announced a phased return of government ministries to Khartoum, starting with security and essential services to normalize the capital [return to the capital](#).
- Large-scale reconstruction projects for iconic religious sites, including the mosques of Omdurman and Khartoum, are being used to signal SAF control and cultural continuity [mosque rehabilitation](#).
- The Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports launched the "Our Playground Unites Us" project in Omdurman to re-engage youth in state-sanctioned activities [stadium projects](#).

## Regional Diplomatic Re-engagement

- Abdel Fattah al-Burhan met with the ambassadors of Morocco and Libya to discuss bilateral cooperation and counter-terrorism efforts [diplomatic meetings](#).
- Morocco expressed support for the Sudanese government's efforts to stabilize the country and restore civilian life [Moroccan support](#).

## Escalation of RSF Brutality in Peripheral Regions

- Detailed reports surfaced of RSF atrocities in Wad Al-Nura, including targeted killings, looting, and a prolonged siege that forced mass displacement [Wad Al-Nura siege](#).
- The situation in El Fasher continues to deteriorate, with reports of RSF militias cutting off food and water supplies to civilian populations [El Fasher siege](#).

## Mobilization of the "Popular Resistance"

- State media is heavily promoting the "Popular Resistance" as a grassroots movement of civilians taking up arms alongside the SAF to defend their communities [Popular Resistance mobilization](#).
- The narrative focuses on community defense in Gezira and Kordofan as a direct response to RSF looting and violence [community defense](#).

## KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

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### Armed Conflict & Militarization

- The conflict has transitioned into a "War of Dignity" narrative, focusing on reclaiming urban centers and mobilizing civilian militias [War of Dignity](#).

- Integration of civilian volunteers into formal defense structures is increasing, raising questions about long-term social order [civilian integration](#).

### Global Health & Biosecurity

- A significant portion of public broadcasting is dedicated to managing chronic diseases (diabetes) and endemic illnesses (malaria) during the upcoming Ramadan fasting period [diabetic management](#).
- Tropical medicine experts are warning of a malaria resurgence in conflict zones where healthcare infrastructure has collapsed [malaria warning](#).

### Leadership Dynamics & Governance

- Burhan is attempting to solidify his position as the "principled" leader of a stable state, contrasting himself with the "chaotic" RSF [leadership framing](#).
- The return of ministries to Khartoum is a key metric for state legitimacy and bureaucratic survival [bureaucratic return](#).

## DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

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### Legitimacy Through Reconstruction

A prominent theme is the use of urban reconstruction—specifically of mosques and sports facilities—as a tool for state legitimacy. By focusing on the restoration of Omdurman's historical landmarks, the SAF is signaling not just military victory, but a return to the "authentic" Sudanese social fabric that the RSF is accused of destroying [mosque restoration](#). This reconstruction serves as a psychological operation to reassure the public that the state is permanent, while the "Janjaweed" presence is transient.

## The Evolution of Civilian Mobilization

The "Popular Resistance" is being reframed from a desperate civilian measure to a patriotic duty. Transcripts highlight local leaders in Gezira and the Nile Basin organizing their communities to repel RSF incursions [local resistance](#). This trend suggests a decentralization of security that may have long-term implications for governance, potentially leading to a fragmented post-war security landscape dominated by local militias with varied loyalties to the central SAF command.

## INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

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The domestic environment is characterized by a deep polarization between the SAF-aligned areas and the RSF-occupied territories. In SAF-held zones like Shendi and Omdurman, there is a push for institutional decay reversal, evidenced by the resumption of sports training and judicial courses [judicial training](#). However, the societal stability is fragile, underpinned by fear of RSF " sleeper cells" and the humanitarian strain of displaced persons.

The RSF-occupied areas, particularly Wad Al-Nura and El Fasher, represent a total loss of government mandate. The broadcasts highlight a complete collapse of civil order, characterized by looting and sexual violence, which the SAF uses to fuel the "Popular Resistance" narrative [RSF atrocities](#). This creates a dual reality within Sudan: one side attempting a return to civil governance, the other mired in asymmetric warfare and survivalism.

## EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

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Sudan's global posture is currently focused on securing regional legitimacy within the Arab and African blocs. Burhan's meetings with Morocco and Libya are strategic maneuvers to frame the RSF as an international terrorist threat, akin to regional insurgencies [diplomatic framing](#). The "outside world" is portrayed as a source of diplomatic support but also a source of external threat, with implicit mentions of foreign support for the RSF.

The government is actively influencing this environment by weaponizing the humanitarian narrative. By highlighting the RSF's siege tactics, the SAF seeks to isolate the RSF internationally and secure more robust backing from allies like Morocco, which has signaled a willingness to assist in reconstruction and stabilization [Morocco cooperation](#).

## THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

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The economic environment remains severely hampered by the conflict, though the state is attempting to reboot local markets and industrial activity in stable zones. Capital flows are mostly directed toward military spending and essential reconstruction.

- **Reconstruction spending:** Significant state resources are being allocated to the restoration of Khartoum's infrastructure [infrastructure budget](#).
- **Agricultural Disruption:** The siege of El Fasher and Gezira has created severe food insecurity, disrupting local agricultural supply chains [food security](#).

- **Commodity Prices:** While specific figures are absent, the focus on "Takaia" (community kitchens) suggests high inflation and a reliance on communal aid for basic food needs [community kitchens](#).

## LEADERSHIP CHANGES

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The transcripts focus on the consolidation of SAF leadership and the marginalization of RSF figures. There are no sudden resignations, but a clear hierarchy is being reinforced.

- **Abdel Fattah al-Burhan:** Portrayed as the stable, principled center of gravity for the Sudanese state [Burhan leadership](#).
- **Ahmed Othman Hamza (Governor of Khartoum):** Emerging as a key figure in the civil administration and reconstruction efforts [Governor Hamza](#).
- **RSF Leadership:** Consistently framed as criminal and inept, with no legitimate political role [RSF framing](#).

## EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

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The network's editorial posture is unabashedly nationalistic and SAF-aligned. The **Lead Stories** are consistently about SAF military successes, mosque renovations, and high-level diplomacy [Lead: Diplomacy](#). Critical global events, such as international peace negotiations that do not involve the SAF on its own terms, are **Buried Stories** or omitted entirely. The tone is reassuring but defiant, designed to bolster civilian morale and recruit for the Popular Resistance. A **Conspicuous Omission** is any detail regarding the actual casualties or tactical losses suffered by the SAF, focusing instead on RSF brutality.

## GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

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The subtext of the day's stories reinforces a binary worldview: the SAF as the protector of the Sudanese nation and the RSF as a foreign-influenced destructive force.

- **Morocco:** Framed as a stable, principled friend and partner in reconstruction [Morocco framing](#).
- **Libya:** Portrayed as a regional ally in the shared fight against transnational terrorism and instability [Libya framing](#).
- **RSF (Janjaweed):** Characterized as chaotic, corrupt, and inept, lacking any principled ideology [RSF subtext](#).

## INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

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- **Narrative Seeding:** The constant use of "War of Dignity" (Harb al-Karama) is a deliberate effort to frame the conflict as an existential struggle for national identity rather than a power struggle between two generals [narrative seeding](#).
- **Meta-Narrative:** The focus on the return to Khartoum is a meta-narrative of state permanence, designed to counter rumors of the government's collapse or relocation [capital return narrative](#).
- **Propaganda:** The use of poetry and religious imagery during the SAF mosque renovations acts as psychological operations to link the military directly with the divine and the historical [religious propaganda](#).

## HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

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- **Militia Fragmentation:** The success of the "Popular Resistance" may lead to a fragmented post-conflict Sudan, where local warlords emerge from community defense groups [militia risk](#).
- **Health Crisis Escalation:** The collapse of healthcare in Darfur and Gezira, combined with the stress of Ramadan, is likely to lead to a spike in preventable deaths from malaria and chronic illnesses [health risk](#).
- **Diplomatic Pivot:** Sudan will likely deepen its ties with North African monarchies (Morocco) as a counterweight to perceived East African or Gulf interference [diplomatic shift](#).

## STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

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**Short Term (1-4 Weeks):** Expect intensified fighting as the RSF attempts to disrupt the SAF's return to Khartoum and Ramadan celebrations. Potential for mass casualty events in besieged cities like El Fasher [El Fasher escalation](#).

**Medium Term (1-6 Months):** The government will likely attempt to formalize the "Popular Resistance" militias, leading to new regulatory challenges and potential friction between civilian volunteers and regular SAF officers [medium-term friction](#).

**Long Term (1-5 Years):** Reconstruction will be the primary driver of state policy, potentially leading to a decade-long authoritarian stabilization period modeled after North African allies, focusing on centralized control and security [long-term stabilization](#).

## RISK ASSESSMENT

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- **Risk: Total Collapse of El Fasher.** Triggers: RSF breach of SAF defensive lines or total exhaustion of food/water supplies. Likelihood: High. Impact: Catastrophic humanitarian crisis and loss of SAF presence in Darfur. Mitigations: International pressure for humanitarian corridors or SAF counter-offensive [El Fasher risk](#).
- **Risk: Militia-State Friction.** Triggers: Disagreement over command structure or refusal of "Popular Resistance" groups to disarm post-conflict. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Secondary civil conflict or localized instability. Mitigations: Formal integration of civilian groups into a new national guard [militia risk](#).
- **Risk: Epidemic Outbreak.** Triggers: Rainy season combined with conflict-driven displacement and lack of malaria medication. Likelihood: High. Impact: Tens of thousands of preventable deaths. Mitigations: WHO intervention and SAF-secured health convoys [epidemic risk](#).
- **Risk: Economic Hyperinflation.** Triggers: Total failure of the agricultural season in Gezira. Likelihood: High. Impact: Urban unrest and famine. Mitigations: Increased reliance on North African food imports [economic risk](#).
- **Risk: Regional Spillover.** Triggers: RSF expansion into border regions with Chad or South Sudan. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Regionalization of the conflict and interstate war. Mitigations: Burhan's diplomatic outreach to regional neighbors [spillover risk](#).

## GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

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- The transcripts fail to address the internal fractures within the SAF, specifically regarding the rumored tensions between regular officers and Islamist-aligned units [SAF internal gap](#).
- There is no mention of the specific military losses suffered by the SAF in the Omdurman offensive, creating an incomplete picture of their actual strength [tactical gap](#).
- The broadcasts do not verify the claims of RSF atrocities in Wad Al-Nura through independent third-party sources, which is necessary for a factual risk assessment [verification gap](#).

## CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

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- **The "Potemkin Reconstruction":** The focus on Khartoum's return and mosque renovation is not a sign of strength, but a desperate psychological attempt to hide the fact that the SAF is losing control over the country's agricultural heartland (Gezira) and border regions [contrarian view](#).
- **The "Militia Trap":** The arming of the Popular Resistance will inevitably lead to a situation where the SAF loses its monopoly on violence, resulting in a fractured state even if the RSF is defeated [contrarian view](#).

## RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

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### For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Formalize a clear legal framework for the "Popular Resistance" to prevent post-conflict militia proliferation.

- Leverage diplomatic gains with Morocco to secure technical assistance for Khartoum's reconstruction.
- Prioritize health-security corridors for malaria medication ahead of the rainy season.

### For Private Sector/Investors:

- Focus on the "Red Sea Corridor" for supply chains, as central and western routes are highly compromised.
- Identify opportunities in urban reconstruction in Khartoum, specifically in SAF-secured zones.
- Prepare for significant regulatory shifts as the state attempts to centralize economic control post-war.

## LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

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The Sovereignty Council and various ministries have issued directives aimed at normalizing the capital and managing the health crisis [governance directives](#).

- **Ministry of Health Ramadan Guidelines:** Policy proposal for diabetic management and malaria awareness during fasting [health policy](#).
- **Khartoum Return Policy:** Ministerial directive for the phased return of civil servants to Khartoum [return policy](#).
- **Popular Resistance Decree:** Formal recognition of community defense groups by SAF leadership [militia decree](#).

## KEY STORIES

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- **Khartoum Return and Reconstruction:** The phased return of government ministries and the rehabilitation of major mosques in Khartoum and Omdurman [link](#).
- **Burhan's Diplomatic Meetings:** Sovereignty Council leader meets with Moroccan and Libyan ambassadors in Omdurman [link](#).
- **Wad Al-Nura Atrocities:** Reports of RSF violence, looting, and displacement in the Gezira village [link](#).
- **Ramadan Health Deep Dive:** Expert panels discussing diabetes management and malaria prevention during the holy month [link](#).
- **Popular Resistance Mobilization:** Coverage of civilian groups in Gezira and the Nile Basin taking up arms to defend their homes [link](#).
- **Premier League in Rwanda:** Sudan's top football clubs Hilal and Merreikh playing matches in Rwanda due to the ongoing domestic conflict [link](#).
- **Stadium Project in Omdurman:** Ministry of Sports launching youth athletic programs to normalize life in SAF-held areas [link](#).
- **Shendi Referee Training:** A 20-person training course for football referees focusing on English terminology and FIFA law [link](#).
- **El Fasher Siege:** The critical humanitarian situation in the North Darfur capital as RSF forces tighten their grip [link](#).
- **Takaia (Community Kitchens):** The rise of community-run kitchens to combat food insecurity in conflict zones [link](#).

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

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**Today's Media Trends** is a public interest experiment in applying deep thematic trend analysis to television news coverage from around the world to explore how responsibly applied advanced AI can help journalists and scholars better understand the overarching trends, themes and patterns of our global world.

**No data is used to train or tune any AI model.**

Each morning, in collaboration with the Internet Archive's TV News Archive, we apply Google's Gemini 3 to deeply examine yesterday's coverage from each television news channel to tease out the overarching themes and trends of its news coverage into a richly annotated thematic analysis. Each high-level insight is connected back to the original broadcast, allowing journalists and scholars to understand the dominate themes and trends and instantly click out to the underlying sources for details.

By helping journalists and scholars see the broader trends and patterns of global news coverage, this analysis helps them identify relevant stories and coverage they might not otherwise have encountered and uncover connections, emphases and narrative shifts that enable more comprehensive reporting and deeper, evidence-based research.

This report is entirely machine generated using Gemini 3 and may include errors and omissions. Please verify all findings. No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

For questions or suggestions, please contact [kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com](mailto:kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com). To learn more or subscribe to our free daily newsletters, visit <https://blog.gdeltproject.org/announcing-our-new-daily-todays-trends-on-capitol-hill-todays->

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