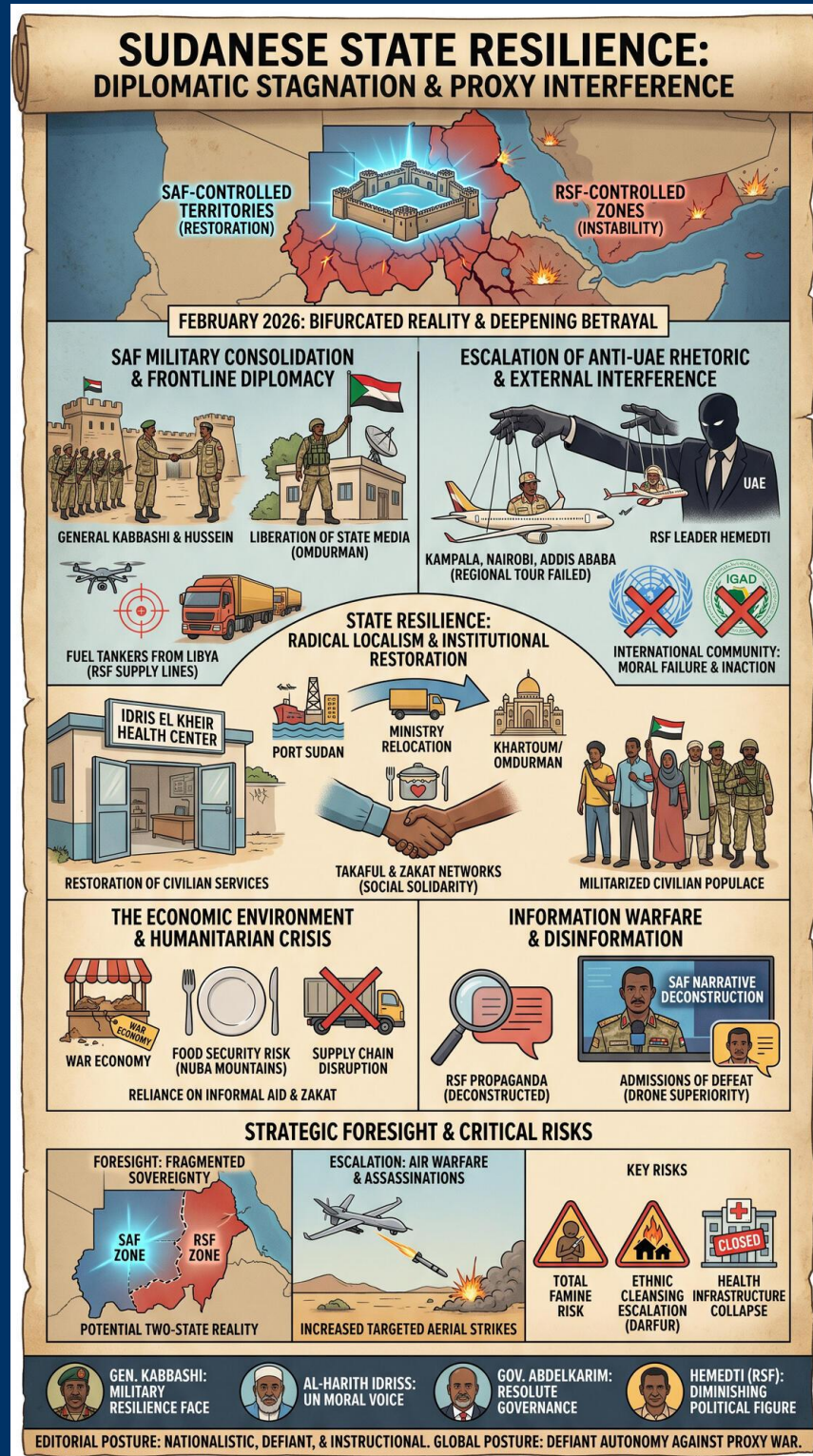


TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

SUDAN

FEBRUARY 21, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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SUDANESE STATE RESILIENCE AMID DIPLOMATIC STAGNATION AND EXTERNAL PROXY INTERFERENCE

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

On February 21, 2026, Sudanese media narratives centered on a bifurcated reality: the slow, deliberate restoration of state functions in SAF-controlled territories contrasted against a deepening sense of betrayal by the international community. The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) leadership continues to project military confidence through high-profile front-line visits and the symbolic **liberation of state media infrastructure** in Omdurman, while simultaneously framing the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) not merely as domestic rebels but as agents of an [external conspiratorial network](#) led by the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The diplomatic discourse has shifted from seeking mediation to demanding punitive action. Media coverage of RSF leader Hemedti's regional tour (Kampala, Nairobi, Addis Ababa) is being systematically deconstructed as a failure of political acumen

and a **reveal of foreign sponsorship**. Domestically, the state is attempting to project a return to normalcy by relocating ministries and focusing on hyper-local governance, zakat-based social safety nets, and public health campaigns. However, the underlying reliance on [informal community aid](#) and "Takaful" (social solidarity) suggests that the formal economy remains in a state of severe fragility, bolstered only by patriotic fervor and military-civilian local cooperation.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

SAF Military Consolidation and Frontline Diplomacy

- Senior military figures, including General Kabbashi and General Mohammed Osman al-Hussein, conducted inspections of the **3rd, 5th, and 19th Infantry Divisions** to signal high morale and [military readiness](#).
- State media celebrated the liberation of the National Radio and Television building in Omdurman as a [pivotal strategic and symbolic victory](#) for the national psyche.
- Reports emerged of SAF successfully targeting RSF supply lines and **fuel tankers** originating from the Libyan border, specifically targeting the ["evil state" support networks](#).

Escalation of Anti-UAE Rhetoric

- Broadcasts intensified accusations that the UAE is the primary architect behind the RSF rebellion, using it to implement [destructive regional projects](#).
- The international community, specifically the UN Security Council and IGAD, were criticized for failing to impose sanctions on the RSF despite [evidence of massacres](#) in Darfur and Gezira.

Restoration of State and Civilian Services

- The government announced the **return of ministries** from Port Sudan to Khartoum/Omdurman to re-establish [institutional stability](#).
- Infrastructure initiatives, such as the Idris El Kheir Health Center in Gezira, were launched to provide [essential medical services](#) under the national health insurance umbrella.
- The High Committee for Voluntary Return registered over **1,000 Sudanese refugees** returning from Uganda to [Port Sudan International Airport](#).

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization: The conflict has transitioned into a "war of institutions," where control over symbolic state buildings and military infrastructure is as critical as territorial gains. The SAF is prioritizing the [destruction of RSF air defense](#) systems provided by external actors to maintain aerial superiority.

Diplomacy & Statecraft: Sudan's diplomatic posture is increasingly isolationist toward regional bodies like IGAD, which are perceived as compromised by UAE influence. The state is instead focusing on **bilateral ties** with nations that do not host RSF leadership, while [challenging the UN](#) for its "moral failure" in addressing RSF atrocities.

Food & Water Security: State-run zakat initiatives and community-led food distribution networks (food baskets) are currently the primary defense against [mass starvation](#) in conflict zones like the Nuba Mountains.

Information Warfare & Disinformation:

State media is actively deconstructing RSF propaganda, particularly the claim that the SAF used chemical weapons, by citing [Hemedti's own admissions](#) regarding military defeat due to SAF drone superiority.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The "Villainization" of External Intermediaries

A dominant theme is the framing of the UAE as a "state of evil" and regional neighbors (Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya) as **conspiratorial hosts** for the rebellion. This narrative serves to externalize the blame for the conflict's duration and justifies the SAF's refusal to engage in certain [negotiation frameworks](#) (like the Quad) that are seen as biased. By framing the RSF as a foreign-backed mercenary force, the SAF strengthens its mandate as the [sole protector of national sovereignty](#).

Localism as State Survival Strategy

Faced with a crippled national treasury, the Sudanese state is pivoting toward **radical localism**. This includes relying on "Takaful" (social solidarity) and local committees to manage essential services. The broadcast highlights [communal kitchens](#) and local health center openings as "state achievements," though they are often funded by private donations or [diaspora zakat](#). This trend indicates a hollowing out of the central state, replaced by a **militarized localism**.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

Sudan's internal landscape is defined by a **militarized civilian populace**. The "Popular Resistance" and "Mustanfereen" (volunteers) are increasingly integrated into SAF operations, creating a civilian-military hybrid order. While this provides a surge in manpower for the SAF, it raises long-term risks of **uncontrolled militias** once the central conflict subsides. Factionalism remains a risk; the broadcast hints at [weakness in certain diplomatic channels](#) and embassies, suggesting elite infighting regarding how to engage with the international community. The push to return ministries to Omdurman is a calculated risk to project stability, but it remains vulnerable to RSF [asymmetric drone attacks](#).

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The Sudanese government portrays the outside world as a **hostile arena** where human rights rhetoric is weaponized against the state while actual atrocities by the RSF are ignored. The global posture is one of **defiant autonomy**. Sudan is positioning itself as a victim of a "multipolar proxy war," specifically naming the UAE as a malicious actor. The broadcasting nation is actively trying to bypass regional blocks like IGAD, which it views as [tools for UAE penetration](#), seeking instead direct engagement with the UN Security Council or sympathetic bilateral partners who recognize SAF's [institutional legitimacy](#).

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The Sudanese economy is largely a war economy characterized by currency collapse, interrupted supply chains, and a reliance on informal aid. Formal market indicators are largely absent, replaced by reports on **zakat disbursements** and humanitarian aid flows. The state is attempting to reactivate the **agricultural sector** in secure regions like the Nile and Gezira states to prevent total famine.

- **Aid Vector:** 11 trucks of medical supplies (representing 77% of local needs) delivered to secure zones, with an estimated [value of 1.8 billion Sudanese pounds](#).
- **Supply Chain Disruption:** Deliberate targeting of **cross-border fuel networks** from Libya to starve [RSF logistical hubs](#).
- **Social Welfare:** Zakat chambers in South Kordofan and Red Sea state remain the **sole providers** of social safety nets for the [disabled and displaced](#).

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The following leadership dynamics were emphasized, signaling a consolidation of the military-governance nexus.

- **General Shams al-Din Kabbashi:** Positioned as the primary "face" of military resilience and [operational oversight](#) during front-line visits.
- **Al-Harith Idriss:** Framed as the **moral voice** of Sudan at the UN, tasked with [confronting the international community](#) over its inaction.
- **Governor Mohamed Ibrahim Abdelkarim (South Kordofan):** Highlighted as a model of "resolute governance," managing a [besieged but unified state](#).

- **Hemedti (RSF Leader):** Portrayed as a **diminishing political figure** and an "ignorant tool" for foreign interests, whose public appearances serve only to [reveal his weakness](#).

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The editorial tone is **nationalistic, defiant, and instructional**. Leading stories focused on military visits and the "moral bankruptcy" of the international community. Humanitarian crises were framed through the lens of **patriotic resilience** rather than desperation. Buried or minimized stories include the specific civilian casualty counts in SAF-held areas and the potential for a long-term famine. There is a **conspicuous omission** of any successful RSF military maneuvers or the specific economic impact of SAF blockades on civilian populations in RSF-controlled zones.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The broadcast frames the international system as a fracturing multipolar arena where Sudan is a victim of proxy ambitions.

- **United Arab Emirates (UAE):** Portrayed as a **hostile, corrupt, and malicious actor**. "The UAE was keen on the Juba peace as a tool for [Hemedti] to [adjust the weights](#) inside Khartoum."
- **United Nations/Security Council:** Framed as **inept and morally compromised**. "Where are the direct sanctions... where are the sanctions [issued by international organizations](#)?"

- **Rapid Support Forces (RSF):** Characterized as a **mercenary rebellion** and "looters" (shifshafa). "They are a malicious project... for [destructive projects](#)."
- **Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF):** Portrayed as the **sole principled and stable institution**. "Your armed forces are striking... standing on [bases of law and regulation](#)."

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

The SAF is conducting a sophisticated **narrative deconstruction** of the RSF. By analyzing Hemedti's speeches, the state seeks to portray the rebellion as losing momentum and desperate. The broadcast seeds the idea that **Colombian mercenaries** are being used by the RSF, which frames the conflict as an [invasion rather than a civil war](#). There is also a concerted effort to "truth-check" RSF claims of military success, using [Hemedti's own words](#) about being defeated by SAF drones as evidence of SAF superiority.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Fragmented Sovereignty:** Sudan is likely heading toward a permanent "two-state" administrative reality, where SAF and RSF manage separate institutional and economic zones for years.
- **Escalation of Air Warfare:** As the SAF focuses on destroying [RSF drone and air defense infrastructure](#), the conflict will increasingly move from ground skirmishes to targeted aerial assassinations and logistical interdiction.

- **Humanitarian Localism:** Without a major international aid pivot, Sudan will rely entirely on its [informal Zakat economy](#), which is sustainable for survival but not for long-term reconstruction.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect an increase in **targeted SAF air strikes** on the Gezira and Darfur fronts as high-level military visits transition into new offensive operations. Domestic "Takaful" campaigns will intensify as Ramadan approaches.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The Sudanese government will likely attempt to **normalize Port Sudan** as a permanent alternative capital, while continuing to move symbolic ministries back to Omdurman to [claim total legitimacy](#).

Long Term (1-5 Years): The conflict may evolve into a **low-intensity frozen war**, with the SAF maintaining the northern and eastern regions while the western regions remain under fractured militia control, unless foreign sponsorship (UAE) is significantly curtailed by [international pressure](#).

RISK ASSESSMENT

- **Risk: Total Famine in Conflict-Isolated Pockets.** Triggers: Failure of local zakat networks and continued SAF/RSF blockades of aid trucks. Likelihood: High. Impact: Catastrophic. Mitigations: Unconditional [humanitarian corridors](#) and direct aid to local kitchens.

- **Risk: Formalization of RSF Political Identity.** Triggers: Increased diplomatic recognition of Hemedti's foreign tour by regional leaders. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: High (delegitimizes SAF). Mitigations: Sudanese state must [weaponize legal evidence](#) of RSF atrocities in international courts.
- **Risk: Ethnic Cleansing Escalation in Darfur.** Triggers: RSF consolidation of El Geneina and Nyala followed by tribal mobilization. Likelihood: Very High. Impact: Extreme. Mitigations: International [sanctions on the RSF](#) supply chains.
- **Risk: Total Collapse of Health Infrastructure.** Triggers: Outbreaks of malaria and cholera combined with lack of pharmaceutical imports. Likelihood: High. Impact: High. Mitigations: State prioritization of [health insurance funding](#) and local drug manufacturing.
- **Risk: Emergence of Untrackable Mercenary Flows.** Triggers: Increased reliance by RSF on **foreign fighters** (Colombians, Libyans). Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: High. Mitigations: Intelligence sharing on [mercenary recruitment networks](#).

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- **SAF Casualty Rates:** The broadcast is entirely silent on military deaths, focusing only on "martyrs," making it impossible to assess the **actual attrition** of SAF forces.
- **Internal Dissent within SAF Regions:** There is no coverage of civil unrest or economic dissatisfaction in Port Sudan or other SAF-held cities, despite the **obvious economic hardship**.

- **RSF Governance Models:** The broadcast portrays RSF territory as **pure chaos**, but fails to analyze how the RSF is actually managing trade or administration in Darfur, which is necessary for a full risk profile.
- **Source of SAF Funding:** While the RSF's foreign support is highlighted, the broadcast omits where the SAF is **sourcing its own weapons** and drones in a sanctioned environment.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

The "Potemkin Liberation" of Omdurman:

While the state celebrates the return to the national radio building, this may be a **strategic distraction** to mask a significant military retreat or stalemate on more critical economic fronts like the Gezira agricultural hub.

Hemedti's Tour as a "Stalling Tactic": The RSF leader's diplomatic tour may not be an attempt at peace, but a **diversionary psychological operation** designed to stall SAF offensives while new [mercenary reinforcements](#) are integrated into the front lines.

Black Swan Event: A **total mutiny** within the RSF's rank-and-file due to pay disputes, leading to a massive internal war within the militia that spills over into neighboring countries, potentially drawing Chad or Libya into a **full-scale regional war**.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Prioritize the **legal documentation** of mercenary presence to trigger [international anti-mercenary conventions](#).
- Engage directly with **diaspora zakat chambers** to create a more formal, trackable humanitarian pipeline.
- Bypass regional blocks (IGAD) and seek **direct UN Security Council resolutions** regarding UAE interference.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Logistics Risk:** Avoid all supply chain routes involving the **Libyan-Sudanese border** due to high-risk SAF aerial interdiction of fuel convoys.
- **Opportunity:** Investment in **decentralized health and solar energy** infrastructure in the Red Sea and Nile states, as the government pivots toward [localized service delivery](#).
- **Compliance:** Strict **due diligence on gold and livestock** exports to ensure they are not inadvertently funding RSF parallel economies.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Sudanese governance currently operates through **military decrees and local committee policies** rather than traditional parliamentary bills. Key press events focused

on **sovereignty and humanitarian logistics**.

- **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:**

- **UN Mission Press Briefing:** Representative Al-Harith Idriss deconstructed the [failure of international law](#) to address RSF "crimes against humanity."
- **Military Command Briefings:** General Kabbashi and General Hussein conducted frontline press events to [affirm the continuity of military-led governance](#).
- **Ministry Return Announcement:** The government officially announced a [return-to-Khartoum policy](#) for essential state ministries.

KEY STORIES

- **Liberation of National Media:** SAF forces reclaimed the Omdurman Radio and TV building, a [symbolic victory](#) against the RSF.
- **General Kabbashi's 19th Division Visit:** A high-profile inspection to boost morale and [signal upcoming offensives](#).
- **Deconstruction of Hemedti's Kampala Speech:** Analytical segment detailing the RSF leader's [lack of political coherence](#) and admissions of military failure.
- **Refugee Return from Uganda:** Over 1,000 Sudanese returned to Port Sudan as part of a [voluntary repatriation program](#).
- **Zalingei and Nyala Atrocities:** Reports on **ethnic targeted crimes** and looting by "shifshafa" (militiamen) in Darfur states.
- **Gezira Health Center Opening:** Opening of the Idris El Kheir Center to provide [essential medical services](#) in a frontline state.

- **Anti-UAE Diplomatic Campaign:** A coordinated push by Sudanese diplomats to [name the UAE as the sponsor](#) of Sudanese instability.
- **Mercenary Hiring Allegations:** Claims that the RSF is recruiting [Colombian mercenaries](#) for urban warfare.
- **Nuba Mountains Food Security:** Local zakat Chamber distributed [30 food baskets](#) to vulnerable families in Delami.
- **Diabetes and Public Health:** Educational segments on **dietary management of chronic disease** amidst medication shortages.
- **Kidney Health and "Maggi" Consumption:** A medical segment warning against using high-salt seasoning as a [pseudo-painkiller](#).
- **Unity in South Kordofan:** Governor Abdelkarim's speech on [state resilience](#) against the "rebellion."

ABOUT THIS REPORT

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.

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