

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

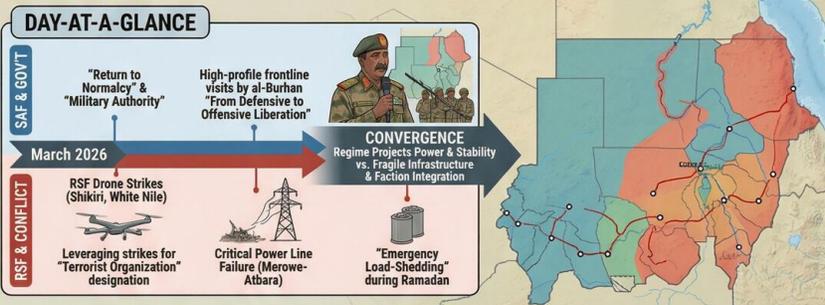
SUDAN

MARCH 14, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

SUDAN'S MILITARY TURNING POINT: SAF CONSOLIDATION & RSF 'TERRORIST' PUSH AMID STRATEGIC RETURN

March 14, 2026: A Narrative of 'Return to Normalcy' and Governance, Balanced Against Infrastructure Fragility and Conflict



MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- Push for RSF 'Terrorist Designation'**
Coordinated campaign after Shikiri strike. Analysts compare RSF to ISIS/Al-Qaeda. Pressure on international community to cut external supply lines (UAE alleged).
- The 'Khartoum is Back' Campaign**
Officials return to Ministry Headquarters (Nile St). Reopening of specialized cardiac/renal hospitals in cleared areas. Symbol of State Capacity.
- Integration of Armed Movements**
JEM & SLM leaders commit to single 'National Army'. Pro-SAF coalition consolidation, rejecting parallel military structures.
- Critical Infrastructure Vulnerability**
Sudden technical failure (Merowe-Atbara line) disrupts River Nile, Red Sea, Khartoum. Repairs complex; warning of prolonged blackouts.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

- Weaponization of Martyrdom**
SAF uses 'War of Dignity' & martyrs' narratives to bridge tribal divides, positioning itself as the sole guarantor of social existence.
- Technocratic Resilience vs. Infrastructural Decay**
Dichotomy: localized successes (paved roads, functioning markets) vs. catastrophic central failures (power grid). Regime proves it can govern locally.
- Integration as a Survival Strategy**
'Coalition of Necessity' (Minawi, Ibrahim) realization that no group survives alone. Unification as the 'national line', posing long-term military governance challenges.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

- Infrastructure & Energy**
Power grid fragility; engineering teams on 'complex repairs'. Reports of militia looting transformers/copper crippling service delivery.
- Security & National Defense**
SAF moving beyond defensive postures (e.g., Bara victory). Regularization of 'Popular Resistance' under strict military command.
- Domestic Stability & Order**
National ID cards mandatory for movement to differentiate citizens from 'foreign mercenaries'. Tighter controls.
- Education & State Capacity**
'Education Support Committee' addressing teacher salaries, millions of textbooks for 2026 academic year in 'safe states'.
- Biosurveillance & Healthcare**
Drug supply struggle amid global crisis. Oaths for 5,000+ new medical practitioners to fill conflict-induced gaps.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

- Short Term (1-4 Weeks)**
SAF Intensification (N. Kordofan, Khartoum). Power crisis peak, public frustration (Ramadan). Peak international lobbying for RSF terrorist designation.
- Medium Term (1-6 Months)**
Civil servant repatriation to Khartoum, basic services reopening. High risk of RSF asymmetric attacks (drones, IEDs). Diplomatic push for alternative energy (solar, wind).
- Long Term (1-5 Years)**
Structural integration of 'Popular Resistance' creates Militarized Social Class. Risk of internal SAF fragmentation. Economy tethered to Gum Arabic/Sesame exports.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

- Focus:** Administrative restructuring & emergency policy, not formal legislation.
- Education Support Committee:** Reviewing teacher salaries & school infrastructure for displaced students.
- National Medical Profession Council:** Mass registration & oath-taking for 28 specialities.
- Hajj & Umrah Higher Committee:** Finalizing 2026 Hajj services (Jeddah), focusing on transparency & cost reduction.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

- For International Policy**
 - Designate RSF 'Terrorist Organization' to align with state narratives, avoid alienating SAF.
 - Focus humanitarian aid on 'Port Suakin' & 'Khartoum' corridors.
 - Monitor 'foreign mercenary' narrative for border security/deportation policies.
- For Private Sector/Investors**
 - Infrastructure Vulnerability:** High risk to central grid. Opportunities in decentralized solar/off-grid solutions in 'safe states'.
 - Commodity Resilience:** Functional Obed/Kordofan markets. Gum Arabic/Sesame operational but require high-security logistics.
 - Logistics & Transport:** Investment in road paving & port expansion (Kassala, Suakin) is a government priority.

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SUDAN SIGNALS MILITARY
TURNING POINT AS SAF PUSHES
FOR INTERNATIONAL TERRORIST
DESIGNATION OF RSF AMID A
STRATEGIC RETURN TO KHARTOUM
GOVERNANCE.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The Sudanese state narrative on March 14, 2026, focused heavily on a "return to normalcy" and the consolidation of military authority following purported strategic victories in Kordofan and Darfur. The leadership, led by Sovereignty Council Chairman Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, is aggressively leveraging recent RSF drone strikes on civilian targets in the White Nile region to lobby for an international "terrorist organization" designation for the militia. This media offensive is paired with high-profile visits to frontline communities to bolster civilian morale and signal that the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) are successfully transitioning from defensive holdouts to offensive liberation.

Simultaneously, the government is executing a symbolic and operational "Return to Khartoum," marked by the reopening of the

Ministry of Health and specialized hospitals in the capital's central districts. This move is designed to demonstrate state capacity and territorial control despite ongoing skirmishes. However, critical vulnerabilities remain, highlighted by a major technical failure on the Merowe-Atbara power line, which has plunged multiple states into emergency load-shedding during the holy month of Ramadan. The convergence of these events suggests a regime attempting to project regional power and domestic stability while grappling with fragile infrastructure and the complexities of integrating diverse armed factions into a singular "national army."

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Push for RSF Terrorist Designation:** State media and political analysts are mounting a coordinated campaign to classify the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) as a [terrorist organization](#) following a drone strike in Shikiri, White Nile, which killed multiple civilians. Analysts are comparing the RSF to groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda to pressure the international community into [cutting off external supply lines](#), specifically targeting the UAE's alleged support.
- **The "Khartoum is Back" Campaign:** Government officials, including the Minister of Health, have officially [returned to their headquarters](#) on the Nile Street in Khartoum. Efforts are underway to reopen specialized cardiac and renal hospitals [to provide services](#) in areas recently cleared of RSF presence.

- **Integration of Armed Movements:** Leaders of major movements like the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) have publicly [committed to merging](#) their forces into a unified national army, signaling a consolidation of the pro-SAF coalition and a rejection of parallel military structures.
- **Critical Infrastructure Vulnerability:** A sudden technical failure on the [Merowe-Atbara transmission line](#) has disrupted the power supply to River Nile, Red Sea, and Khartoum states. Authorities have warned that repairs [may take several days](#) due to the complexity of the fault.
- **Diplomatic Shift Toward Iran and Somalia:** The successful [evacuation of 24 Sudanese students](#) from Iran and high-level engagement with Somalia suggests a deepening of ties with regional actors who support Sudanese state sovereignty against perceived external interference.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Critical Infrastructure & Energy Security: The power grid failure highlights the fragility of Sudan's transmission architecture. Engineering teams are working on "complex repairs" while the government implements [emergency load-shedding schedules](#). This follows earlier reports of systematic looting of transformers and copper by militia forces, which has [crippled service delivery](#) in many regions.

Security Architecture & National Security: Defense Minister Hassan Daoud Kabroun emphasized that the SAF is moving beyond defensive postures, specifically citing the [victory in Bara](#) as a catalyst for liberating North Kordofan and Darfur. The ministry is

also focused on the [regularization of reserve forces](#) and "popular resistance" volunteers to ensure they remain under strict military command and do not evolve into new independent militias.

Domestic Stability & Social Order: The government is tightening identity controls, with the Defense Minister announcing that [national ID cards](#) will be mandatory for movement to differentiate between Sudanese citizens and "foreign mercenaries" allegedly recruited by the RSF. This policy aims to address the influx of foreign fighters from [neighboring western countries](#).

Education & State Capacity: A newly formed "Education Support Committee" is addressing the [economic situation of teachers](#) and the production of schoolbooks. The government has begun receiving [millions of textbooks](#) for secondary schools to ensure the 2026 academic year can proceed in "safe states."

Biosurveillance & Healthcare: The Health Ministry is struggling to maintain a [drug supply chain](#) amid what it describes as a global crisis involving the "American-Israeli war with Iran." Despite this, the state is facilitating [medical oaths](#) for over 5,000 new practitioners to fill gaps left by the conflict-induced brain drain.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Governance activities focused primarily on administrative restructuring and emergency policy implementation rather than formal parliamentary legislation, reflecting the ongoing state of emergency. Key executive committees are currently managing the

transition of displaced students and the rehabilitation of seized infrastructure.

- **Education Support Committee:** Chaired by the Minister of Education, this committee is [reviewing teacher salaries](#) and infrastructure needs for schools hosting displaced students.
- **National Medical Profession Council:** Conducted mass registration and [oath-taking ceremonies](#) for 28 medical and health specialties to ensure legal compliance and professional ethics during the reconstruction phase.
- **Hajj and Umrah Higher Committee:** Met in Jeddah to finalize [2026 Hajj services](#), focusing on transparency and cost reduction for Sudanese pilgrims despite the financial crisis.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Weaponization of Martyrdom and Moral Authority: The SAF is increasingly using the narratives of "War of Dignity" and the [sacrifice of martyrs](#) to bridge tribal divides. By visiting remote massacre sites like Shikiri, Al-Burhan is positioning the SAF not just as a military force, but as the [sole guarantor of social existence](#) for rural communities that have been traditionally marginalized but are now bearing the brunt of RSF incursions.

Technocratic Resilience vs. Infrastructural Decay: There is a striking dichotomy between the government's technocratic successes—such as [paving 8 kilometers of roads](#) in New Halfa or maintaining a functioning [crop market in Northern Kordofan](#)—and the catastrophic failure of central infrastructure like the

national power grid. The regime is attempting to prove it can still "govern" through localized development projects while its strategic assets are increasingly targeted by [hostile drone technology](#).

Integration as a Survival Strategy: The public declarations of loyalty from formerly autonomous movements like those led by [Minni Minawi and Jibril Ibrahim](#) suggest a strategic realization that no individual group can survive an RSF victory. This "Coalition of Necessity" is being framed as the [unification of the national line](#), but it poses significant long-term challenges for military governance and the eventual return to civilian rule.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect an intensification of SAF offensive operations in North Kordofan and the outskirts of Khartoum to capitalize on recent momentum. The power crisis will likely trigger [increased public frustration](#) during the end of Ramadan, potentially forcing the government to divert more resources toward secure energy corridors. International lobbying for the RSF terrorist designation will reach its peak ahead of upcoming regional summits.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The government will prioritize the [repatriation of civil servants](#) to Khartoum and the reopening of basic services. This will be a high-risk period for "stay-behind" RSF cells to conduct asymmetric attacks (drones, IEDs) to prove the capital is not secure. Diplomatic efforts will focus on [securing alternative energy investments](#), such as solar and wind, to bypass vulnerable transmission lines.

Long Term (1-5 Years): The structural integration of civilian "popular resistance" into the SAF will create a new, [highly](#)

[militarized social class](#) that will dominate post-war politics. If the government fails to successfully integrate these diverse forces, Sudan faces the risk of internal SAF fragmentation. The economy will remain tethered to [agricultural exports \(Gum Arabic, Sesame\)](#) as the primary source of foreign currency for reconstruction.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For International Policy:

- Designate the RSF as a "Terrorist Organization" to align with Sudanese state narratives or risk further alienating the SAF leadership toward [Iran and Russia](#).
- Focus humanitarian aid on "Port Suakin" and "Khartoum" corridors, as the government is [accelerating clearing procedures](#) for NGOs in these areas.
- Monitor the "foreign mercenary" narrative as a precursor to more aggressive [border security and deportation](#) policies in the Sahel region.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Infrastructure Vulnerability:** High risk to central grid investments; opportunities exist for [decentralized solar and off-grid](#) energy solutions in "safe states" like River Nile and Red Sea.
- **Commodity Resilience:** The Obeid and Kordofan [crop markets remain functional](#) despite the war; Gum Arabic and Sesame supply chains are operational but require high-security logistics.

- **Logistics & Transport:** Investment in road paving and port expansion in [Kassala and Suakin](#) is a government priority, providing potential opportunities for construction and logistics firms.

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.

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For questions or suggestions, please contact kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com. You can also learn

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