

## Country Report

# Journalists in Sudan

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## Backgrounds of Journalists

The typical journalist in Sudan is male, in his late-thirties and holds a university degree in journalism or communication. Of the 255 interviewed journalists, 89 were women, making for a proportion of 34.9 percent of the overall sample. On average, Sudanese journalists were 37.34 years old ( $s=11.49$ ); half of the journalists were younger than 35 years. Journalists tend to be well educated: 79.3 percent of the respondents held a Bachelor's degree; another 14.8 percent held a Master's degree and 1.1 percent of the journalists obtained a doctoral degree. Across the whole sample of Sudanese journalists, 65.2 percent had specialized in journalism and/or communication.

## Journalists in the Newsroom

The majority of journalists interviewed in Sudan held a full-time position (81.5%), whereas 6.2 percent of the respondents indicated that they had part-time employments, and 12.3 percent worked as freelance journalist.

On average, Sudanese journalists had worked as journalists for 11.41 years ( $s=8.61$ ), and about half of them had more than nine years of professional experience. Most journalists worked on a specific desk (62.0%). The remaining 38.0 percent of the respondents indicated that they worked on various topics and subjects. On the whole, 26.6 percent Sudanese journalists had had additional jobs outside the area of journalism. The majority of the interviewed journalists were members of a professional association (78.5%).

## Journalistic Roles

With regards to professional role orientations, Sudanese journalists found it most important to support national development, to be a detached observer, to advocate for social change, and to influence public opinion (see Table 1). The relevance of these roles was fairly undisputed among the interviewed journalists as the relatively low standard deviations indicate. At the same time, respondents turned out to be less keen on acting as an adversary of the government, supporting government policy, and conveying a positive image of political leadership. However, standard deviations point to a great deal of disagreement among journalists with regards to these aspects of journalistic roles.

Still, a majority of journalists in Sudan found it important to let people express their views, to report things as they are, to provide analysis of current affairs, to provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience, to provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life, to provide information people need to make political decisions, and to monitor and scrutinize political leaders and business. Overall, Sudanese journalists' look fairly similar to their counterparts in other parts of the world, while at the same time, they also subscribe to some of the basic elements of development journalism.

Table 1: Roles of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very important"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Support national development	275	95.6	4.79	.61
Be a detached observer	274	94.5	4.72	.62
Advocate for social change	274	93.1	4.72	.65
Influence public opinion	269	91.4	4.64	.72
Let people express their views	274	90.9	4.59	.88
Report things as they are	272	90.4	4.56	.76
Provide analysis of current affairs	272	90.4	4.56	.76
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	274	89.1	4.52	.82
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	272	87.5	4.51	.86
Provide information people need to make political decisions	275	87.3	4.49	.91
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	270	83.7	4.39	.97
Monitor and scrutinize business	273	81.7	4.37	1.00
Motivate people to participate in political activity	275	70.5	4.07	1.26
Provide entertainment and relaxation	270	60.4	3.71	1.36
Set the political agenda	271	53.5	3.58	1.41
Be an adversary of the government	273	43.2	3.12	1.62
Support government policy	266	34.6	2.92	1.54
Convey a positive image of political leadership	275	34.2	2.83	1.55

Question: Please tell me how important each of these things is in your work. 5 means you find them extremely important, 4 means very important, 3 means somewhat important, 2 means little importance, and 1 means unimportant.

## Professional Ethics

Sudanese journalists generally demonstrated a strong commitment to professional standards of ethics. Respondents almost unanimously agreed that journalists should always adhere to the codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context (see Table 2). Furthermore, four out of five journalists agreed with the view their ethical decisions are a matter of personal judgment and that these decisions depend on the specific situation. Slightly more than three out of five interviewees subscribed to the idea that it is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it. This points to an interesting tension between ethical universalism on the one hand, and a subjectivist, situationist and exceptionalist view on the other

Table 2: Ethical orientations of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "strongly" and "somewhat agree"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context	275	95.3	4.79	.77
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	273	82.4	4.38	1.16
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	273	78.8	4.17	1.30
It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	272	65.1	3.67	1.63

Question: The following statements describe different approaches to journalism. For each of them, please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree. 5 means you strongly agree, 4 means somewhat agree, 3 means undecided, 2 means somewhat disagree, and 1 means strongly disagree.

The picture was mixed with regards to a selected number of potentially controversial reporting techniques. Two out of five journalists in Sudan found the use of confidential business or government documents without authorization justifiable at least on occasion (see Table 3). The same is true for exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story, getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information, and paying people for confidential information. Still, journalists thought it was acceptable to claim to be somebody else, to make use of personal documents (such as letters and pictures) without permission, and to use hidden microphones or cameras. Only a minority of journalists found it permissible to use re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors, to alter or fabricate photographs or quotes from sources, and to publish unverified content. The practice of “brown envelope journalism” – that is, journalists taking money from sources, presumably in return for positive coverage – was almost unanimously condemned by Sudanese journalists.

*Table 3: Justification of controversial reporting methods by journalists*

	N	Percentage saying “always justified”	Percentage saying “justified on occasion”
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	275	23.6	21.1
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	276	17.8	21.0
Using confidential business or government documents without authorization	276	15.9	26.1
Claiming to be somebody else	274	13.9	20.1
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	274	13.5	16.4
Paying people for confidential information	275	13.1	27.3
Using hidden microphones or cameras	275	11.6	19.6
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	276	3.6	.4
Altering or fabricating quotes from sources	276	2.9	2.9
Publishing stories with unverified content	275	2.2	2.9
Altering photographs	274	1.8	9.9
Accepting money from sources	275	1.5	2.2

Question: Given an important story, which of the following, if any, do you think may be justified on occasion and which would you not approve of under any circumstances?

### Professional Autonomy and Influences

Slightly more than half of the Sudanese journalists (53.8%) said that they had complete or a great deal of freedom in their selection of stories. With a total of 53.3 percent, the number of respondents who had complete or a great deal of freedom in deciding over what aspects to emphasize in a news story was almost equal. A minority of journalists reported that they participated in editorial coordination activities (such as meetings and news management) “always” or “very often” (39.7%).

News production is influenced by a variety of factors. Among the potential sources of influences mentioned in the interview, journalism ethics fared on top of the list among Sudanese respondents (see Table 4). A majority of journalists found their work substantively constrained by their personal values and beliefs, by the availability (or non-availability) of news-gathering resources, by time limits, and by editorial policy.

Overall, internal factors were found to be more influential than external constraints. Around half of the Sudanese journalists felt influenced by sources from within the political and civic realm: business people, the government, pressure groups, politicians, and public relations. They also reported only minor influence from friends, acquaintances and family. Likewise, economic influences – stemming from owners and managers, market competition and profit expectations as well as advertising – seem to have medium relevance in Sudanese newsrooms.

Table 4: Perceived influences

	N	Percentage saying “extremely” and “very influential”	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalism ethics	118	94.9	4.66	.73
Your personal values and beliefs	254	90.9	4.60	.83
Availability of news-gathering resources	270	87.8	4.33	.92
Time limits	266	86.5	4.35	.96
Editorial policy	270	81.5	4.20	.95
Information access	270	78.5	4.05	1.38
Media laws and regulation	267	74.5	3.97	1.35
Military, police and state security	269	73.6	4.03	1.52
Audience research and data	263	72.2	3.95	1.09
Censorship	271	69.7	3.88	1.51
Feedback from the audience	271	67.5	3.71	1.32
Competing news organizations	263	66.5	3.69	1.31
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	265	65.7	3.74	1.02
Relationships with news sources	267	65.5	3.61	1.49
Advertising considerations	250	63.2	3.68	1.18
Managers of the news organization	260	55.0	3.49	1.09
Owners of the news organization	246	53.3	3.44	1.23
Business people	267	52.1	3.12	1.69
Profit expectations	238	51.7	3.39	1.32
Government officials	269	50.9	3.22	1.60
Pressure groups	270	50.0	3.13	1.64
Your peers on the staff	248	49.6	3.42	1.11
Politicians	266	47.7	3.16	1.59
Colleagues in other media	267	43.1	3.04	1.49
Public relations	268	40.3	2.75	1.67
Friends, acquaintances and family	270	28.1	2.34	1.61

Question: Here is a list of potential sources of influence. Please tell me how much influence each of the following has on your work. 5 means it is extremely influential, 4 means very influential, 3 means somewhat influential, 2 means little influential, and 1 means not influential.

### Methodological Information

<i>Size of the population:</i>	1,000 working journalists (estimated)
<i>Sampling method:</i>	convenience sample for newsrooms and journalists within newsrooms
<i>Sample size:</i>	277 working journalists
<i>Interview methods:</i>	face-to-face and mail/e-mail
<i>Response rate:</i>	84%
<i>Period of field research:</i>	07/2013-04/2015