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## Dotawo: A Journal of Nubian Studies

### Title

The Art of Revolution: The Online and Offline Perception of Communication during the Uprisings in Sudan in 2018 and 2019

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/88t8t1b9>

### Journal

Dotawo: A Journal of Nubian Studies, 8(0)

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### Publication Date

2023

### DOI

10.5070/D68061378

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Peer reviewed

*article/* **The Art of Revolution: The Online and Offline Perception of Communication during the Uprisings in Sudan in 2018 and 2019**

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*abstract/* The article deals with art from the Sudanese revolution in 2018 and 2019 (the December Revolution). The focus is on the most recognizable and widespread images from the uprising and their presence on the streets of Sudanese cities and social media. The article shows how freedom of expression exploded on the Sudanese streets after years of censorship, suppression, and violations of freedom of speech, media, and civil rights. Art and social media had significant roles in covering the uprising. Issues related to the importance and value of art in transmitting social discourse and dissent in a tightly controlled society are raised. These issues should be the subject of wider research on conflict and social media in Sudan. This article focuses only on a small part of this vast and important topic.

*keywords/* Sudan, revolution, uprising, street art, social media, protests, murals, graffiti, images, iconic

## **1. Introduction**

This article focuses on the images, graphics, and photos circulating on the internet – often photographs of murals and graffiti from the walls of Sudanese

streets. I discuss how street art manifested the discourse of public opinion in Sudan during the revolution and how social media became a significant part of contemporary communication. Images from social media conveyed by the international media represented the voice of Sudanese people outside the country. I will show how social media helped stage events, control activities, and back the official policy of the Sudanese government to create a different narrative of events in Sudan. This article engages with the question of how the reach of social media platforms has changed the nature of political disobedience, and how it provided new tools to overcome the repression imposed by the regime and allowed quick, safe, and anonymous going out from hiding as public opposition.

## 2. Methodology

In this study, I will use an analytical approach to examine articles and social media concerning the 2018/2019 December Revolution in Sudan. International media used several terms to describe the events that began in Sudan in December 2018, depending on whether the events resulted in fundamental social changes or just political change. In my understanding, the events in Sudan should be called a 'revolution', because it was a dynamic and major shift of political power and directly related to social changes.

In this study, I employed various data collection methods, relying on an extensive review of news articles, reports, and social media content. At the same time, I conducted a comparative study on international media and its interpretation of revolutionary art. I observed social media reactions to threads related to the Sudanese revolution; spoke with Sudanese people in Khartoum and the provinces; followed the art groups created on the streets and online; analysed what happened to both street and digital art after the protests ended. All of this was the basis of the analysis of art's impact on the Sudanese people during the revolution and more than two years after these events. How strong emotional charge do they still have? For the article, I limited myself to the artwork directly related to the causes of the revolution, its most important events, and the participation of women, as they were strongly represented on the streets of Sudan. Chosen street art was posted on social media in the form of photographs, paintings, graphics, cartoons, etc. I have chosen the most frequently reproduced

artworks and the creations that had the longest impact on public opinion, because over time these have become symbols of the revolution.

### 3. Politics and Social-Economic Context

The concept of revolution and the struggle to gain freedom is not a new phenomenon in Sudan. In 1964, the first president of Sudan, Ibrahim Abbūd was brought down during the October revolution.<sup>1</sup> In 1969, Jafar al-Numayri overthrew the democratic rule of al-Azhari, and then was removed from power by the popular movement in 1985.<sup>2</sup> Omar al-Bashir also came to power through a military coup in 1989.<sup>3</sup> Many reasons contributed to the revolution in 2018. As in 1964 or 1985, the political and social situation was complex, and many of those problems are still relevant in 2021.<sup>4</sup> However, during the 30-year reign of Omar al-Bashir, a new threat to democracy appeared while Sudan was becoming a fundamentalist dictatorship, which led to the economic sanctions imposed by the US and limited the inflow of foreign capital and opportunities for economic diversification. Media censorship and the rise of Islamic conservatism led to systemic changes dividing citizens into classes by origin, sex, and religion. Progressive changes in the law allowed the authorities to censor the citizens. In 2009, the Press and Publication Acts was introduced. This law established the National Council of the Press and Publication, which is responsible for regulating the media and licensing the newspapers. This Council is not independent, and the government appoints its members.<sup>5</sup> During protests in 2019, 79 journalists were arrested based on this law. In 2015, Law on Access to Information was introduced to the public, a law restricting citizens' access to information.<sup>67</sup> This was a time of high censorship and suppression. All of this meant silencing the political opposition and any criticism.

The independence of South Sudan in 2011, after the devastating Second Civil War lasting 22 years, had a dramatic effect on Sudan's economy. The Sudanese pound was devalued, and inflation rose to 70 per cent. Before that, since 1999, oil fueled the economic growth in Sudan. There was a period of relative prosperity, but the government missed this 'oil boom' and the opportunity to diversify the economy. Oil deposits are mainly located in today's South Sudan, and with the secession of South Sudan, Sudan's economy lost its main driving force and primary income. In addition, US sanctions, corruption, and government inefficiency limited any changes that would improve citizens' lives. The economic crisis aggravates the

additional costs of fighting the insurgents in the city streets and the continuous strengthening of the security sector.<sup>8</sup> All this resulted in currency depreciation and hyperinflation.

Thus, in the economic crisis, the government tried to recover by drastically reducing social financing. In 2010, the activist Mohammed Hassan 'Al Boushi' Alim, accused Nafi' Ali Nafi, the Former Assistant to the President, of corruption and human rights violations.<sup>9</sup> Enas Satir, the Sudanese artist, refers to this event in her work explaining the causes of the 2018 revolution. On her Instagram profile, she writes: "(...) Al Boushi, when facing Nafi' Ali Nafi' (...), asked him: *Tell me about the bread, that is now the size of an ear.*" Every word uttered by Al Boushi is as powerful today as it was years earlier.<sup>10</sup> The reduction in the size of the bread referred to by Enas Satir was associated with the reduction in government subsidies on basic goods, followed by an increase in grain prices. At the same time, bakers were forbidden to raise the price of bread. Having no other choice, they began to reduce the size of the bread. Nevertheless, bread shortages were not the main reason leading to the uprising in 2018. The reason should be sought in the Sudanese economy's long-term deterioration. Many years of Islamist military regime activities have allocated more funds to the security apparatus than to economic development strategies. The corrupt system hit all citizens and significantly increased living costs, such as food and gas. Deteriorating living conditions spurred the development of a strong and conscious civil society. Professionals began forming trade unions to mobilize action for better pay and working conditions. The protesters demanded to overthrow the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and a president who had held power for three decades. Without doubt, the lack of trust in the government and mounting tensions due to no prospects, economic collapse, and lack of access to reliable information, forced people into the streets. In 2013, 2014, and 2016, the police and the military brutally crushed the strikes in Khartoum.

In December 2018, the government, wanting to save the country from financial collapse, gave up subsidies for bread and fuel, which caused public outrage and started protests.<sup>11</sup> These austerity measures were initially introduced in smaller cities. The government believed that the citizens from outside the urban areas would accept the measures without protests because they wouldn't be able to mobilize. That is why the protests started in Atbara and other smaller cities. Before the protest moved to the capital, the people united in these smaller cities to demand radical political and social change. Referring to these events, artist

Abdul Rahman Al Nazeer released ‘[arava](#)/The Bread Loaf’, inspired by Michelangelo’s painting ‘The creation of Adam’.<sup>12</sup> In the original, God stretches out his hand towards Adam sitting in Eden. His hand has an outstretched finger to transfer the spark of creation to Adam. This image has penetrated pop culture worldwide, and the symbol of conveying the ‘divine particle’ or ‘spark of life’ is often paraphrased in visual artworks. For Abdul Rahman, this scene takes place at a typical Sudanese bus station – a Sudanese pound in God’s hand, which symbolizes the spark of life necessary for human survival. In waiting for being created, Adam’s limp hand holds a bread loaf.



**Figure 1: ‘Train’.** Credit: Mounir Khalil. Source: [arava](#)/  
<https://twitter.com/TheMantle/status/1166501152537620480>

The uprising started with the protests in Atbara, home of the Railway Workers Union, the most vital trade union in Sudan and the libertarian driving force that fuelled the 1964 and 1985 uprisings.<sup>13</sup> Responsible for the protests' organized activities, the Sudanese Professionals Association, established in 2018, follows the Union tradition.<sup>14</sup> Entry in Khartoum of a train from Atbara full of people chanting: “*The dawn has come, Atbara has arrived*” has become one of the 2018-2019 revolt symbols. This event is also a reference to the October 1964 strike, when

citizens from Kassala boarded their freedom train to Khartoum to help oust General Abbūd from power.<sup>15</sup>

One of the most recognizable images of the train is the art piece by Mounir Khalil (Figure 1), which captures the joy of the people on the train and the tense anticipation of the crowd gathering at the tracks.<sup>16</sup> Hussein Merghani (Figure 2) immortalized this moment in a painting showing hundreds of people welcoming the train filled with waving flags. Merghani's painting exudes strength, energy, and a sense of community – it reflects the atmosphere in Sudan during the revolution.<sup>17</sup>



**Figure 2: 'Freedom Train'.** Credit: Hussein Merghani. Source: [www/  
https://www.usip.org/blog/2020/11/how-art-helped-propel-sudans-  
revolution](https://www.usip.org/blog/2020/11/how-art-helped-propel-sudans-revolution)

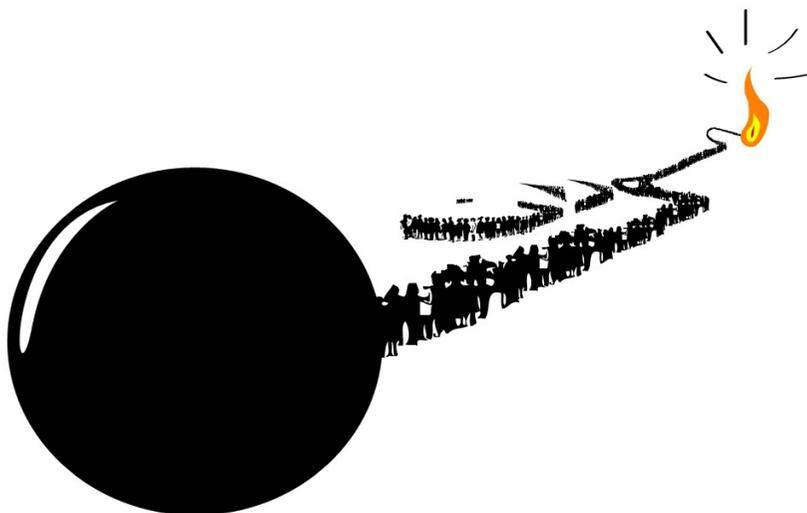
Protests broke out in Sudan in December 2019, calling for the stepdown of President Omar al-Bashir and his regime.<sup>18</sup> In particular, large numbers of young people, especially women, took to the streets. The mobilization of people in Atbara began the pursuit of political change for the entire nation. On December 19, girls from one of the schools in Atbara marched in one of the largest markets in the city chanting slogans against cutting subsidies. This was the result of increasing grain and bread prices and thus increasing prices for school meals. The girls were joined by others, and photos from the demonstration quickly

circulated on social media and sparked protests in al-Gedarif, Madani (near Khartoum), Nyala (Darfur), and Port Sudan.<sup>19</sup>

Contrary to the uprisings of 1964 and 1985, where trade unions played a leading role, the uprisings in 2013, and especially that of 2018, were driven by masses of young people and activists organizing protests and providing up-to-date information. As far as the uprising of 2019 is concerned, the protests had a unique character because they were a combination of efforts by professional and social groups – those that were first mobilized in 2013, community-based structures and initiatives training from the beginning in non-violent civil engagement. The Sudanese Professional Association (SPA) showed extraordinary leadership skills, however, it was the involvement of civil society that made it possible to sustain a decentralized campaign based on non-violent protests.

The collaboration of local groups and trade unions (which always were a very strong part of civil society organizations) was particularly noticeable. SPA mobilized the people and actively participated in the activities against al-Bashir's regime, as during previous revolutions in which professional organizations took an active part. However, despite the similarities, the situation in 2019 was different due to the organizational structure. Decentralized activities in social media influenced the spread of information and mobilization of people across the country. Youth became more politically involved and joined volunteers and professional associations in training and organizing civil society during the protests. Even threats of arrest and attacks on protesters did not stop Sudanese citizens from going out in the streets.

The dramatic situation in which the Sudanese found themselves and the exhaustion of their trust in the government is shown in Khalid Albaih's artwork (Figure 3).<sup>20</sup> In his graphic, people are queuing for bread and other necessities and this queue ends with a bomb. The graphic is inspired by everyday life because people are forming a tight queue. There is already a fuse lit at the end of the queue, illustrating that citizens' patience has its limits, that the process of social awakening has already started, and that there is no turning back.



@KhalidAlbaih

**Figure 3: Cartoon by Khalid Albaih. Source: [www/https://kultwatch.se/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/KhalidAlbaih\\_QueueingBomb\\_Sudan.jpg](https://kultwatch.se/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/KhalidAlbaih_QueueingBomb_Sudan.jpg)**

In the face of widespread frustration and anger, president al-Bashir dissolved the government and appointed military officers in its place to avoid stepping down from power. However, on April 10, a military coup led to his resignation. History has come full circle, and al-Bashir was removed from power the same way that he seized power 30 years earlier. The protests continued as the army that forced al-Bashir to step down was engaged in the Transitional Military Council (TMC), chaired by General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, also known as Hemedti.<sup>21</sup> Hemedti is known in Sudan for his ties to The Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a paramilitary group descended from the infamous Janjaweed militias. Protesters demanded civilian participation in the transitional government and the dissolution of TMC. Among the protesters were young women seen on the frontline of the marches, women whose rights were systematically violated by the Bashir regime. Female

protesters have been verbally and sexually harassed by the police and security forces. This meant that each of the protesting women had to face great fear. They had to be strong, and their strength emanated from the other women sharing the struggle. Each woman shouting anti-government slogans led masses of protesters behind her.

The protests continued nationwide despite the increasing acts of aggression from the armed forces. On June 3, the RSF cordoned off sit-in protesters and used firearms. This attack on peaceful protesters in front of the military headquarters in Khartoum resulted in the killing of at least 127 people, and the attack is called the Khartoum massacre.<sup>22</sup> The RSF could not have acted on their own, and it seems that the TMC had approved the attack. Khartoum was cut off from the world by an internet blackout. Suddenly, all social media platforms updating daily on the situation in Sudan went silent. There was no possibility to use traditional media, television did not broadcast information, and newspapers were suspended. Acts of violence escalated, and shocking descriptions of attacks, shootings of protesters, and rapes of women appeared in reports of witnesses calling for international help.<sup>23</sup> Increasing social tensions prolonged peace talks that were completed with the signing of the Draft Constitutional Declaration on August 4 by the Forces of Freedom and change – consisting of the uprising movement and the TMC.<sup>24</sup> The agreement stipulated that a Transitional Government of four civilians and three military officers would oversee changes in the country during a three-year transition period. The declaration did not contain specific economic reforms, specific mandates to improve the rights of women and youth, any plan to prosecute those guilty of war crimes, or a rigorous investigation into the June 3 massacre.<sup>25</sup> However, changes began with dissolving al-Bashir's NCP party and the repealing of the Public Order Act<sup>26</sup>, which targeted women drastically and restricted their freedom.<sup>27</sup> Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) was prohibited under penalty of imprisonment.<sup>28</sup>

Strikes are over, but the Sudanese still fear that history will repeat itself and that the military will try again to usurp power. Democratization in Sudan has begun, but the elites associated with al-Bashir's regime can slow down the process significantly. The failure to include social and economic reforms in the constitution may compromise the main postulates of the movement. The agreement also avoids issues of war and peace, racism, and the marginalization of minorities and refugees. However, solving such important and challenging problems requires time and careful observation of the government's actions, and

Sudanese activists seem to be watching. Such a high civic mobilization may allow the building of a strong democracy because public opinion will hold both transitional and elected political leaders accountable. The Constitutional Charter from 2019 established a government consisting of a civilian cabinet, a Sovereignty Council, and a Legislative Council. Decisions regarding domestic and foreign policy are taken by Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the head of the army and the chairman of the Sovereign Council, which bypasses civilian leadership and calls for the dissolution of the government. Meanwhile, citizens continue to demand a civilian government with full executive powers.

#### 4. Art beyond Divisions and Prejudices

The core of the uprising and the source of its strength was the equality of all Sudanese people. No protests in Sudan had previously included every ethnic group and social class included. The Sudanese have emphasized that not only the people of Khartoum took protests to the streets, but also the peoples of Kordofan, Nuba Mountains, and Darfur. In a video from the protests, a woman chants: *“From Kordofan [the revolution] has emerged after we have been hit by gunfire. This is a government with no feelings... and the Nuba mountains, like Darfur, their blood is very expensive. We will protect our land, oh farmer. Our Sudan will be set free!”*<sup>29</sup> Three decades of hate speech used on generations of people was an easy and effective way to turn people against each other. NCP promoted ethnic, religious, and social discrimination and justified hatred and violence against minorities and refugees. Government propaganda polarized the country and aroused distrust between different ethnic groups while emphasizing the supremacy of Sudan's Arabic-speaking Muslims. Ethnic identification has been used by al-Bashir's regime for decades, dividing the country and fuelling inequality. During the civil war in Darfur, the rebel tribes were called by the government “Black Africans”. In opposition to them, the Sudan army was identified as Arabs.<sup>30</sup> Attempts to implement the same ethnical division on young people impacted the social response and became a double-edged weapon. The opposite, as expected, brought people closer under the slogan: “We want a country free of racism!”<sup>31</sup> Young activists created a new quality of communication and collective disobedience. No one felt excluded, and a concept of peaceful demonstrations, so different from the terror used by the security apparatus, appealed to all people. The opposition to al-Bashir's rule formed a fertile ground for the unification of all Sudanese people and pushed them to act as one.

The long-lasting civil war in Darfur was used as a government excuse for the deepening economic crisis and the stricter racist policy towards non-Arabs.<sup>32</sup> During the sit-in, protesters have often stressed that, as a result of long-term government campaigns targeting ethnic minorities, the division of society is a severe problem.<sup>33</sup> Currently, there are studies on the Arab Islamist Sudanese government inspiring the conflict in Darfur.<sup>34</sup> In 2018, the government accused ten young Darfur men of planning a terrorist attack on protesters on the streets of Khartoum. According to public records, they planned to use self-made bombs. The plot was exposed in social media and showcased the same race-based politics that the al-Bashir regime was known for. The friends of the young Darfurians identified them as peaceful students rather than terrorists.<sup>35</sup> In response to such a despicable attempt to spark ethnic riots, protesters called for unification with a special message to the government: *You racist egomaniac! We are all Darfur!*<sup>36</sup> As a counter-narrative to the regime's propaganda, artists embraced Sudan's cultural diversity and appreciation for uniting differences. One of the murals by Mughira, a fine arts student, shows a series of figures standing next to each other in traditional and contemporary clothes and headgear – symbolizing participation in protests regardless of origin.<sup>37</sup>

Racism in Sudan is a complex issue due to the mixture of various populations. Deep-rooted racism, discrimination, and intolerance are the results of years of government propaganda emphasizing racial and ethnic superiority. With the spread of the internet, propaganda moved to social media. Pages responsible for spreading ethnic propaganda were often exposed on Facebook during the revolution in 2019. Sudanese knew the regime's methods and remembered many cases when fake news and hate speech started violence between ethnic groups, especially in the South.<sup>38</sup> The exclusionary policy not only covered non-Arab tribes but also women, who were the primary victims of the Public Order Act.<sup>39</sup> Coupled with physical and verbal abuse, women were gradually forced out of society.<sup>40</sup> Women were in the front of the protests from the first day of the revolution; they became symbols of strength and muses for the artists. 60-70% of the participants were women, so there is a reason why this revolution is often described as the Women's Revolution.<sup>41</sup> Women inspired artists with their steadfastness when facing the oppressive army officers, strength during the long sit-in and ululation, kindness, and readiness to help the wounded and those in need. Female artists' perspective was crucial for showing women's everyday life without beautifying it and of priceless value for understanding their motivation

and hopes. The artist Almogher Abdulbagey painted 17 images of walking women in traditional and contemporary clothes – reflecting their ethnic diversity. These abstract figures painted with vivid colours emanate power, as reporters who witnesses the marches and chanting described the women’s presence in the demonstrations.<sup>42</sup> This is an example of how fake news targeting ethnic groups spread by the regime backfired during the protests. Art began to express the opposition to the state propaganda, and this became a turning point in the perception of social divisions by the Sudanese themselves. There is no consent to racist propaganda in these artworks.

On 8 April 2019, Lana Haroun took the photo of Alaa Salah in front of the military headquarters in Khartoum. The iconic photo shows Alaa Salah standing on the car’s roof, with her hand up, leading the chant and making the crowd cheer together.<sup>43</sup> Alaa Salah was then a 22-year-old architecture student who advocated for women's rights. Her photo became a symbol of protests in Sudan and sparked a new trend in artworks focusing on women's rights, strength, steadfastness, and constant motivation to get the people around them involved. Of course, there are many photos and videos from this event. However, this photo widely echoed around the world. Alaa Salah’s white tobe is associated with professions such as teachers, nurses, and midwives – they adopted it as their uniform and is still considered a modest garment for educated and independent women. The thoughtful selection of Alaa Salah’s clothing makes reference to the tradition of Sudanese female activists from the 1940s and 1950s, and the dress emphasizes the legacy of women's fight for social justice.<sup>44</sup> “*At a national conference in 1969, activist and first female member of Sudan’s Parliament, Fatima Ahmed Ibrahim, argued that women’s rights were in keeping with Sudanese traditions. As evidence of this, Ibrahim asked the audience to compare her tobe with the western business suit of then-President Gaafar Numeiri, who stood next to her.*”<sup>45</sup> The choice of the outfit was undoubtedly a well-thought-out move and its message spread widely and drew attention to the feminist movement in Sudan. This image of a young student is still the most recognizable and most shared image in social media of the 2018/2019 revolution. The only downside to the attention the image attracted is that the focus was not on the words spoken by Alaa Salah but only on her outfit. She was quoting the reaction of Sudanese poet Azhari Mohamed Ali against the Public Order Act: “*They imprisoned us in the name of religion, burned us in the name of religion ... killed us in the name of religion*”.<sup>46</sup> Lana Haroun’s photo, referred to as a symbol of the revolution, was repeatedly adapted and changed by

artists worldwide, sometimes in an optimistic or satirical way, and sometimes in a more serious and sublime manner. For example, in Ali Hamra's cartoon where Alaa Salah replaced the Statue of Liberty on the pedestal, al-Bashir runs away in panic upon seeing her. Kesh Malek's mural presents Alaa Salah standing among the flashes of mobile phones commemorating the event with a slogan next to it: "Liberty is not a statue anymore. She is alive with flesh and blood". In an impressionist manner, a painting by Fatima Abdullahi shows Alaa Salah raising her arm in the air amidst a mostly female crowd of protesters, holding their phones with a flashlight, which creates a magical glow and gives the picture a nearly mystical expression. Of course, Alaa Salah is one of the thousands of women taking part in the revolution, standing up against uniformed men. However, this image became viral, and Alaa Salah became an icon of the revolution, a symbol of women's fights for equal rights. Thanks to her recognition, she also became an activist raising Sudanese women's rights to the international agenda. "Every revolution inspires another revolution," Alaa Salah says in an interview, stressing that women will not hesitate to take to the streets again when needed.<sup>47</sup>



**Figure 4.** An adaptation of Bint El Sudan perfume label. Credit: Amado Alfadni.

Source: [www/](https://www.)

<https://twitter.com/shambat2000/status/1251838673362001921/photo/1>

A unique adaptation of Alaa Salah as “The scent of the revolution” was created by artist Amado Alfadni (Figure 4). He brilliantly turned the renowned Bint El

Sudan perfume emblem into a powerful message of revolution. The exhibition of Bint El Sudan perfume labels created by Amado shows how the iconography has changed over the decades, from the original to a censored version of an Arabian woman dressed from head to toe. This collection reflects the political discourse and social changes in Sudan without words and helps realize the extent of changes and restrictions in the lives of all Sudanese women.<sup>48</sup>

A billboard with a photo of Alaa Salah next to the sign: "My grandmother was a Kandaka." In a powerful way, this picture emphasizes Sudanese women's strength.<sup>49</sup> These words were also chanted during the demonstration, empowering, and connecting generations of women walking together. On a mural painted by artists Amir Saleh and Belal Abdelrahman it is stated: *Our history returns back with Kandaka*. It shows a woman wearing a helmet and brandishing a sword for her enemies.<sup>50</sup>

Sudanese artist Yasmin Elnour's Instagram account is Kandaka Chronicles. The nickname is inspired by the Kushite queen. Her works beautifully and harmoniously draw on Nubian traditions and combine ethnic aesthetics with modern symbols.

The art piece "Kandaka factory" emphasizes the participation of women in strikes (Figure 5). She traces the women's ancestry back to the pyramids of Ancient Kush, where she placed the factory producing all the brave Sudanese warriors. With the art piece 'Women rights?' Yasmin Elnour asks where are women's rights, and why are Sudanese women second-class citizens? She writes on her Instagram account: "*A surprising status quo in the old stomping ground of the Kandakes - Nubian Warrior Queens that fought off foreign powers and steadfastly ruled the Kingdom of Kush. We cannot blindly accept oppressive frameworks but instead carve a path of resistance, in the glowing spirit of our female ancestors.*"<sup>51</sup>



**Figure 5: 'Kandaka Factory'. Credit: Yasmin El Nur's aka Kandaka Khronikles. Source: [www/https://www.instagram.com/p/B6gu7tBHds7/](https://www.instagram.com/p/B6gu7tBHds7/)**

A collage by Mahammed Mahdi shows women in white tobles and modern clothes marching with their fists raised in protest and as signs of anger. Above them, in the air, as if freed and freely soaring upwards, there is a woman in white and next to her the inscription: *Long live the women's struggle!*<sup>52</sup> The artist emphasizes women's daily battle for equality, free speech, and fair governance (Figure 6).



**Figure 6: Graphic by Mohammed Mahdi reading 'Long live the women's struggle'. Source: [www.kultwatch.se/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/866BFC8F-AF67-4463-8BDA-08D5CAD648B6-760x1024.jpeg](https://kultwatch.se/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/866BFC8F-AF67-4463-8BDA-08D5CAD648B6-760x1024.jpeg)**

Artist Alaa Satir focused on the socio-political aspects of women's lives in Sudan. Her series of cartoons, "*We are the revolution*", honours female protesters' centrality in uplifting and sustaining the resistance through their strength, courage, and commitment.<sup>53</sup> In her graphic, she also refers to Sudan's

Independence Flag, which no longer represents the state. Gaafar Nimeiry replaced this flag with the tricolor black-white-red flag with a green triangle at the hoist in 1970. The Independence Flag, as seen on the Alaa Satir graphics, resembled the flags of Rwanda and Tanzania, emphasizing the racial diversity of Sudan and the joining of all ethnic groups, while Nimeiry's flag derives from purely Arab aesthetics and refers to the Sudanese Arab identity.<sup>54</sup> Many protesters waved the Independence Flag during the rallies. Its colors emphasize the combination of Arab and African roots, which was also reflected in the people's outfits on the streets. Like many young activists, Alaa Satir raised a very important issue regarding identity and ethnicity, which was widely discussed during the sit-in. For the first time, these matters were discussed openly and emphasized that multi-ethnicity is what makes Sudan stronger. In her works, Alaa Satir also shows the everyday life of protests and the enormous influence of women who took the fight to the streets and for whom giving up is not an option. One of the murals with the inscription: 'We are the revolution, and the revolution continues' portrayed women in traditional clothes with their hands raised and their fists clenched in a gesture of victory.<sup>55</sup>

Another mural, painted on a blue background, shows a woman with a raised hand in a sign of victory with slogans next to this like: 'Freedom, peace, and justice', 'Tasqut Bas' and 'Ladies, stand your ground; this is a women's revolution'. The artist writes about the events in Sudan: "*We are not here just to overthrow a political regime but the corrupt social system that came along with it, that targeted women and used all techniques to try and push them backwards!*"<sup>56</sup>

Mergani Salih chose a different form of expression by creating a mosaic with thousands of photos of women protesting and suffering from an oppressive government. With dedication, he searched the Internet to choose the right photos to create a representation of Sudan's embodiment. The character is deeply rooted in Sudan folklore – Habouba, grandmother and caretaker. He adopted a photo of an older woman in a traditional headdress, with a calm expression on her face, curious eyes, and a face bearing traces of work and time – like Sudan itself, tired and aged but still with a sparkle in the eyes looking to the future. This video mosaic is available online and even now makes an unforgettable impression on the onlooker.<sup>57</sup>

An anonymous female artist who adapted Banksy's 'Mona Lisa with rocket launcher' created a mural deeply inspired by pop culture. After all, Banksy's

London mural was referring to Da Vinci's 'Mona Lisa'. The mural in Khartoum shows a figure whose outline resembles Banksy's 'Mona Lisa', but her face is that of a Sudanese woman with a scarf on her head and a rocket launcher in her hands. This simple image has a powerful and direct message: beware of women's power.

## 5. Online Art

A new generation of young activists looks back to the Girifna (meaning 'we are fed up') movement, founded by students in Khartoum in 2009, for inspiration. Their fight shifted the protest onto completely different tracks than those known from previous uprisings. Girifna volunteers organized just before the elections that would take place in 2010, realizing that the society was under-informed, and deciding to change this situation.<sup>58</sup> Awareness campaigns quickly expanded to organizing protests and publishing news without censorship. Within a few years, these activists became the main opposition force, and they are now visible on the political scene in Sudan. Contemporary opposition groups significantly differ from classical parties such as the National Umma Party, the Democratic Unionist Party, and the Communist Party.<sup>59</sup> The SPA distinguished itself through their activities in social media, thanks to which Sudanese people were allied to their demands. At the beginning of the revolution, SPA formed alliances with many political parties. As a result, 'The Forces of Freedom and Change' was formed.<sup>60</sup> Very quickly the SPA started expressing the voices of all Sudanese and published daily on Facebook the public opinion on the current situation in Sudan.

The activists arousing political awareness among young people and manifesting their social needs come from various regions of Sudan and even the diaspora. Thanks to such participation of young people, revolutionary agitation was very effectively transferred to social media and developed countless forms of expression. These tactics have so far been entirely ignored by political parties, but young innovative activists identify themselves without any problems with them. Elusive on the web, they are free to report on events in Sudan and strengthen international support for the protesters. Online communication has been constantly changing over the years, adapting to the situation and guaranteeing optimal and safest oppositionist conditions. NISS (National Intelligence and Security Service) created cyber units called *jihadist cyber units*. Members created false accounts on Facebook or Twitter to disinform protesters,

spread propaganda, or lure individual activists into traps. These efforts did not go unnoticed. The SPA has created applications for contact between members and a website that broadcasts protests live. Social media became the primary source of information about events in Sudan and the main communication tool for revolutionaries. One can say that they even fuelled their activities. The regime controlled the state media and for a long time provided only propaganda to improve its image. At the same time, information was published on Twitter and Facebook, simultaneously translated from Arabic to English.<sup>61</sup>

Al Jaili 'Jaili' Hajo is an artist who has pointed out the lack of information about the situation in the country in the media. In his collages, he compares public television news with photos from protests, showing how the reality on the streets of Khartoum is diametrically different from government propaganda broadcasted on television.<sup>62</sup> In one of his collages, we see people injured after the June 3 2019 crackdown. In a manner, such artworks replace public media, which had no information about this event.

The live-streaming massacre on 3 June 2019 was an unprecedented case made possible by the courage of the protesters who shared photos and videos in social media. Journalists producing "Africa Eye" for BBC have collected several videos from the attack by RSF in a shocking short documentary about the revolution.<sup>63</sup> The documentary shows the ruthless and planned actions of the militia and the terror of the protesters. Live posts on Twitter reported a minute-by-minute escalation of violence by the RSF. Photos showed people injured and killed on the streets, overcrowded hospitals, and bodies pulled out from the Nile. All this, seen almost live, confronted the world with what was happening in Sudan in an unprecedented manner. Social media flooded with digital art after these horrifying events.

The artist Enas Satir created the series 'Kaizan and why they are bad for you' – a compilation of drawings explaining the origin of the word 'kaizan' (metal mug) and why the Sudanese use it as a name for the government (see also below). This series is aesthetically appealing and, for those from abroad, also very informative. Enas Satir put a broader context on Sudan's situation in a simple and clever manner.<sup>64</sup> She writes on one of her drawings: *If Sudan was a person, it would by now be gravely ill* next to a metal cup ('Kaizan') filled with blood.<sup>65</sup>

Under al-Bashir's rule, any political expression was forbidden, so artists developed a way to spread anti-government content, in an indirect way. However, during the uprising, the freedom of expression replaced all restrictions, and artists finally could speak their minds, and via social media they could reach people anywhere. Visual and audio-visual forms of documentation attracted a larger group of people and had a more significant impact on the audience than TV news. Never has such an extensive range of information resources been used to show the power of the people in Sudan. An online mobilization aimed at identifying the aggressors who were attacking protesters, another unprecedented method of exercising justice. Based on photos and videos available online, a group of women recognized the RSF officers and published their data on Facebook. For this reason, operations' officers began to wear masks to hide their faces and prevent their identification.<sup>66</sup>

There has been an unstoppable flow of drawings, cartoons, and memes, fuelling the protests with bold images and intelligent retorts. This uprising sparked a social, political, and cultural awakening that intertwined with each other, creating an image of the marginalized before pressing problems and underlining the power of social resistance. In art, we can find traditional symbols and African indigenous motifs. Also, the modern cultural references blend poetically with traditional Sudanese aesthetics, creating bold and authentic artwork. Thanks to the influence of tradition, so deeply rooted in Sudanese consciousness, art reached everyone, regardless of age or origin. Artists found a way to spread ideas and share their views in an accessible and universal way. We can distinguish references to the history of Sudan, be it ancient (the kingdom of Kush) or more modern (independence and earlier revolutions). For example, a collage by Merghani Salih with a young boy reciting poetry during protests superimposed on Kushite pyramids refers to the ancient history of Sudan (Figure 7). It is an adaptation of the photo entitled 'Straight Voice,' a powerful image made by Yasuyoshi Chiba, who won World Press Photo in 2020, in the Photo of the Year category.<sup>67</sup>



**Figure 7. Adaptation of 2020 World Press Photo by Yasuyoshi Chiba. Credit: Merghani Salih. Source: [www/](https://twitter.com/Merg_Salih/status/1251875224838176771/photo/1)  
[https://twitter.com/Merg\\_Salih/status/1251875224838176771/photo/1](https://twitter.com/Merg_Salih/status/1251875224838176771/photo/1)**

A famous slogan appearing on social media: *Make Sudan Great Again*, on the background of monumental buildings from the Kush period, is an ironic comment on Donald Trump's slogan "Make America Great Again", but it also emphasized the reliance on the powerful Sudanese ancestors dominating in north-eastern Africa during the Kushite period. The people of ancient Nubia were captured as slaves by Egypt. Then the power dynamics between Nubia and Egypt shifted, and Kush ruled Egypt as pharaohs of the 25th Dynasty (about 747-656 BCE). Thus, art teaches history; the Sudanese cannot live in chains, and they are capable to regain their freedom. Ben Jones, with his artworks, alludes to modern times in world history. His graphics portray al-Bashir and his military allies as Nazis. It is a powerful and terrifying combination, but it is indisputably associated with the racist rhetoric of the NCP authorities and the genocide committed in Darfur and Kordofan.

The global movement #BlueForSudan started in solidarity with Sudanese martyr Mohamed Mattar, whose favourite colour was blue. An artist known as Kandaka Chronicles (see above), created a photomontage with a young boy crying in a boat floating on a bloody river. It is a homage to those killed in the crackdown

and their families. The dark blue backdrop honours Mohamed Mattar, the boy's endless tears remind of the ongoing aggressions against peaceful protesters. Also, 'Blue Night' by Mounir Khalil, an impressionist painting, shows people waving flags against a starry sky background. It is a beautiful art piece full of tranquillity and dedicated to those fallen during the uprising (Figure 8).



**Figure 8: 'Blue Night'. Painting by Mounir Khalil. Source: [www/  
https://pl.pinterest.com/pin/635992778614196359/s](https://pl.pinterest.com/pin/635992778614196359/s)**

A graphic by Jaili Hajo is a collage of a viral photo made on the streets of Khartoum. In a pickup truck used by security services lies a protester knocked over on the car's back but still holding the Sudanese flag high in the air. On the car roof, covered by the waving Sudanese flag, stands an enormous figure of al-Bashir. He is not essential for the artist; his face does not even deserve to be shown; he is only a symbol of oppression. The artist thoughtfully depicts the sense of fear that people must have felt when faced with the armed forces. We can notice an officer with a long truncheon with a split end on the side of the car – the truncheon was probably used against the crowd.<sup>68</sup>

When the news broke out on social media that a NISS car killed the 3-year-old boy Muayed Yasir and seriously injured his 5-year-old brother, people worldwide were shocked and mobilized against the impunity of the security services in Sudan. Artists decided to react too.<sup>69</sup> The 'Hanz' graphic designer on his Twitter account condemned this event and asked for public support to the mother of the two boys, one of which was still in intensive care at the hospital (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Death 3-year-old boy Muayed Yasir. Credit: Hanz. Source: [article/  
https://twitter.com/mr\\_hanzala/media](https://twitter.com/mr_hanzala/media)

Mustafa Alnasry created a poignant graphic of Bashir dancing on stage during his '1 Million People March' organized to underline people's support for the government. Alnasry shows the coldly calculated dance of the President, posing as a kind leader, at the same time, ruthlessly attacking peaceful resisters.<sup>70</sup>

Drawings inspired by pop culture reached the most remarkable popularity online. For example, in the work of Ibrahim Jihad (known as hxmaside), there is a reference to the Transformers' universe of the DC comics. His graphic entitled 'Fallen' presents the symbolic metal cup, "Kaizan" (see above) damaged by bullets, dropped on the ground or thrown away, thus no longer needed.<sup>71</sup> This art piece resembles a movie poster, and as with any poster of that kind, we can find out that "Kaizan Fall" was produced and directed by Sudanese people – a clever artistic move. Another point of inspiration from pop culture is the reference to the KFC restaurants: The slogan "Al-jidād al-iliktrūni" means "The electronic chicken", and it is referring to people hired by the regime to spread fake news on the Internet. In a satirical manner, the revolutionaries created posters portraying Omar el-Bashir on a KFC flyer, where KFC was replaced by KEC (Kaizan Electronic Chicken).<sup>72</sup> What is 'Kaizan'? It is a traditional mug made of steel and called 'koz' (singular of Kaizan). There are different theories on why Sudanese started calling the ruling party 'Kaizan'. Alshaheed Alimam Alhassan Albana, the Muslim Brotherhood founder, once said: "*Knowledge is a sea and we are its kaizan*", which back then described Muslim Brotherhood members but now refers to Omar al-Bashir and the National Congress Party (NCP).<sup>73</sup>

Among the artists who commented on the events in Sudan were cartoonists. Cartoons are sarcastic, often on the verge of absurdity or insult, but their message refers often to tragic events. They have sometimes been made without any inscriptions because the image itself is universal and does not need any explanation. Khalid Albaih shows how General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, also known as Hemeti, climbs on the corpses of the Sudanese people to attain power (symbolized here as a throne).<sup>74</sup> A pile of bodies wrapped in shrouds is a very powerful and upsetting image. In a violent manner, the artist addresses the civilian casualties, which are part of the brutal rise of Hemeti to power in Sudan. Hemeti, together with general Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, are responsible for armed attacks in Darfur and took part in the war in Yemen. Their rise to power was a blow for the Sudanese and, at the same time, a call for mobilization to continue the struggle for democracy. Sudanese cartoonist Boushra Al-Mujahid commented daily on the events in Sudan. His images were always on point, clever, and understandable even for foreigners unfamiliar with Arabic.<sup>75</sup> The security forces were so obedient that they even arrested a donkey that the protesters had marked with revolutionary slogans. The event recorded by the phone of an onlooker set in motion a wave of satirical cartoons ridiculing the absurd

attempts of the government to keep order on the streets. This image transformed into all sorts of memes and cartoons to mock the soldiers and express disrespect for their actions.<sup>76</sup>

Participating in sit-ins was associated with the risk of an attack by the security forces using tear gas and rubber bullets and all kinds of physical and mental aggression. A video available online shows a group of protesters on one side of the street and police forces on the other, throwing tear gas canisters into a crowd. We see the brave woman Rifka Abdel Rahman taking a tear gas canister (which is about to explode) and throwing it back. She was named 'Bumban Catcher' ('Bumban' means tear gas in Sudan). Merghani Salih returns to these events in his art after the revolution using 3D models. The series is called "Living with Revolutionaries" and, as he describes himself, it was created to capture the icons of the Sudan Revolution. One of these 3D models, posted on Merghani's Twitter account, commemorated the courage of Rifka 'Bumban Catcher'.<sup>77</sup>

## 6. Street Art

During the uprising, alongside regular verbal and written communication, a flood of sketches, murals, graffiti, and cartoons spread the word about the revolution across Sudan. Art became a platform for transmitting information in a highly censored environment, reflecting social tensions, and forming political discourse. Slogans were everywhere, on people's clothes or bodies, but mainly on all urban structures. Sudanese people expressed their emotions on the building walls, streets, public transport, fences, and even trees and animals. Anti-government slogans appeared in every space that it was possible to draw, even the smallest ones. The slogan *Tasqut bas* addressed to el-Bashir and his regime can be translated as: *Just fall, that's all* or *You'd better fall*.<sup>78</sup> This slogan was repeated and hash-tagged many times on different kinds of brochures and online flyers. Almost equally famous was: *Ash-shaab yurid isqat an-nizam*, which means: *The people want the regime to fall*.<sup>79</sup> It appeared on the buildings and bus stops not only in Khartoum but in other towns and even villages. Activists created the hashtags #BlueForSudan and #KeepEyesOnSudan, which appeared widely both on the streets and online. These hashtags attracted world attention on Sudan and kept up the mobilization in favour of the revolution. #BlueForSudan represents the favourite colour of the martyr Mohamed Mattar, who was shot protecting two women during a police attack (see above). Another hashtag formed during

the protests was #Sudaxit. This alluded to Brexit and emphasized that protesters identified more with African peoples than with Arabs and demanded the separation of Sudan from the Arab League.<sup>80</sup>

Due to the restrictions imposed on Internet and the censorship practised in public television, the flow of information had to find other ways to spread. The activists used brochures, postcards, or leaflets, sometimes minor marks on clothes or on their bodies. That information included the dates and places of protests, comments on current events, revolutionary slogans or symbols, and glorifications of the martyrs. Women, for example, used the henna painting (traditionally made before weddings) and designed anti-government slogans or images on the hands or feet of protesters.<sup>81</sup> Also women wove revolution symbols into their traditional clothes, adding victory signs or *Tasqut bas* slogans to their *toubes*, which gained over the years representative status as a reminder of feminist values fought by their mothers and grandmothers.<sup>82</sup> Older generations wore the white *toube* during the previous popular uprising, which once again linked traditions with modern times.

The artists felt responsible for showing the emotions of the Sudanese people and spreading the revolutionary messages. Such a message can be found on a mural in Khartoum, which is an interesting adaptation of [www](#)/Eugène'a Delacroix', 'La Liberté guidant le peuple'. The accompanying text reads: The revolution will go on. These artworks were an expression of despair and hope. They were born out of a desperate need for change and the necessity of speaking the truth. Street art, impermanent and unique, could be removed at any time, and the artists who made it were in constant danger of being caught and imprisoned. All of this was evanescent. It emphasized the fragility of human existence and made it even more inclined to reflect on the values of life and what is worth fighting for. Assil Diab, a graffiti artist, known as 'sudalove', was one of the many female Sudanese artists courageously creating art on the streets of Khartoum.<sup>83</sup> Diab painted murals and immortalised the memory of Sudanese killed by security forces during the uprising. Sometimes the families were taking part in creating the martyrs' portraits, which allowed them to add something personal to commemorate their loved ones. The portraits are reminders of the loss and sacrifice, of government brutality and their disrespect for human life, and the price of freedom and democracy.

One of the most high-profiled cases of police and intelligence services brutality was the death of Ahmed al-Khair, a 36-year-old teacher from Kashm al-Qirba. He was arrested at his home after the protest he was taking part in and died on 2 February 2019, after a week of detention. The police stated that the cause of Ahmed's al-Khair death was the result of his poor health condition and was not related to his imprisonment. However, the examination of Ahmed's body, first by his family and then by pathologists, indicated death by beating and torture to which he was subjected during the interrogation. The horrifying details of the torture shocked and infuriated the public and Ahmed's story was told nationwide.<sup>84</sup> Sudanese still recall these events in conversations, emphasizing that this was the turning point of the revolution. There was nationwide mobilization and awareness that nothing would stop the regime to silence the voice of the nation. Anger and opposition to violence united the Sudanese people more than before. Images of Ahmed were held by the protesters during the rallies, were reproduced on the city's walls, and circulated in social media. When, on 30 December 2020, 29 intelligence agents and police officers responsible for Ahmed al-Khair's death were sentenced to death, a crowd rallied outside the court in Omdurman. This event went down in history as a moment of national mourning from which Sudanese rose resiliently. After the revolution ended, Ahmed's story was taught in schools and drawings of his face appeared on the walls of school buildings. These paintings were often painted over by the security services but were always recreated by the people, determined and in strong opposition to the regime's brutality and their efforts to censor history.

The 3 June 2019 massacre has left a deep mark on everyone who participated in the sit-in and watched the live streaming. RSF militia forces opened fire on unarmed protestants, beat many of them, and raped 48 women. In their works, Galal Yousif and Amel Bashier condemned cruelty and rape as tactics for pacifying women. Following these events, the African Union degraded Sudan's rights as a member.<sup>85</sup> The daily news about atrocities committed by the RSF is reflected in the artists' work following these events. The mural of Galal Yousif, destroyed during the June 3 crackdown, shows people shouting or screaming. Above them, huge hands try to silence the figure in the centre. The inscription in Arabic on the side explains: *You were born free, so live free.*<sup>86</sup> Yousif painted several murals in Khartoum. One of them was placed under the bridge near the sit-in and depicts screaming figures with horrified and distorted faces. The incomprehensible anxiety can be compared with Edward Munch's 'Scream'.<sup>87</sup>

Colourful murals, graffiti, sculptures, and installations within the sit-in created a whole new space in the centre of Khartoum, a city within a city. Space where people felt free, expressed their political views with no fear, and experimented with new forms of artistic expressions. It was an unprecedented phenomenon – there has never been such a concentration of artists from all over Sudan with different cultural backgrounds covering various fields of fine art. Space within the sit-in became an exhibition on a vast scale, with paintings, graffiti, sculptures and installations, various traditional crafts, regional costumes, poems, songs, and dances.

In the face of a military crackdown, protesters opposed the aggression in a very clever way. They collected military equipment and reused it differently, peacefully changing its meaning and creating an utterly different dichotomy between them and the government forces. They made it possible to find a bit of humour in these difficult moments and ridiculed the militia on the other side of the barricade. Such acts gave people a different perspective; they began to let go of fear and regained the dignity that was taken from them by years of oppression. Empty tear gas canisters that were used to separate protesters have been transformed into flower vases, containers, or electrical connectors.<sup>88</sup> There was an impressive increase of photos on social media showing an endless creativity, among these one may pick the "tasqut bas" slogan made with tear gas canisters. The protesters were utterly changing the functions and common perceptions of military equipment, almost straightforwardly saying objects themselves are not dangerous but only become so in the hands of dangerous people. An example is a photo of a ring made from a bullet. Art, therefore, did not embellish reality and did not avoid showing the violence and terror in which everyday protesters functioned.

In 2019, merchandise with symbols of the revolution started to appear in the street markets. They were mainly produced abroad by the diaspora, but some handmade products also circulated, albeit in a limited range, also in Sudan: stickers, phone cases, bags, and T-shirts, on which symbols and hashtags spread the message of the revolution. Street art became popular and functioned as a reference to political ideas and the current situation in the country.

## 7. Summary

The 2018/2019 revolution in Sudan was one of the most significant and best-organized revolts in the Arab world in recent years. There were large-scale protests, which showed social commitment and the effectiveness of opposition by activists. The political engagement of young activists changed the approach to protests in Sudan. They showed extraordinary creativity and commitment, and thanks to that, they reached vast sections of the society. Resistance groups, which have been emerging since 2009, moved their activities to the streets, showing their opposition through slogans, murals, and leaflets. Most of their activities quickly spread online, where they joined forces with other groups to create an efficient machine of resistance and for spreading information without the fear of governmental censorship. Their actions in the streets and online created a foundation for mass resistance, which was used to the full during the protests in 2018-2019.

This article shows the phenomenon of revolutionary art in shaping public opinion, transferring information, political discourse, and calls for mass disobedience. The photos of the revolution, murals, and graphics are still circulating in social media and the events related to them are still present in the consciousness of the Sudanese.<sup>89</sup> Most of the murals have been painted over by the police, but the ones in the University of Khartoum campus have remained untouched. They were protected from destruction by the people and can also be seen in galleries online.<sup>90</sup> These murals are examples of the strong emotions evoked in the Sudanese people, even after the end of the revolution. Their preservation can be understood as a tool for remembering, for commemorating the loss of loved ones and the tragedies of many families, raising people's spirits, and keeping resistance alive.

The artwork that was created out of this revolution has a significant role in civil disobedience. Sudanese people lived under constant control, repression, and racism-based politics. The need to talk about it loudly and be heard was unbearable. Art helped them express themselves and brought people together for a common cause. It also changed the information flow and created a dialogue with the government. The protesters' actions inspired the artists who, over time, mobilized the people. It was a mutually reinforcing relationship that gave birth

to a freedom movement that emanated strength and bravery. Art became an integral part of this movement as the artists raised awareness and became a voice of the people. Art was inclusive, anti-conformist, and empowering, and it was used as a censorship-free source of news and expression.

Street art and graffiti glorify people and their sacrifice, challenge them during the revolution and after, and remain a constant memento of the events in Sudan. War has many faces, but whether it is a cultural, ideological, or religious war, it is associated with social change and never leaves the country unchanged. In Sudan, during the uprising, this change took place in the freedom of expression, greater self-awareness of citizens and creativity in all areas of fine arts. Poetry, songs, photography, collages, and street and online art during the revolution in the blink of an eye responded to the ever-changing situation in Sudan. Art inspired by actual events evokes instant connection and understanding between the artist and the viewer. Apart from anti-government slogans, art reflects the revolutionary reality. It shows sadness and fear; there are visible references to police brutality, excessive use of force, tear gas, ammunition, torture, and mental and physical exhaustion of people. It is an incredibly moving picture, without glorifying a peaceful uprising but considering the dangers associated with it. Devoid of the romantic vision of the freedom struggle in which all protesters happily return home.

The events in Sudan inspired and still inspire artists. 'Kejer's Prison' – a short film by Mohamed Kordofani, in a moving way shows the social tear during the revolution, especially among the military soldiers.<sup>91</sup> Many years of indoctrination or compulsion to obey the order have caused the soldiers to turn against their fellow citizens. Everyone should be held accountable, there is no doubt, but Mohamed Kordofan's film changes a bit our perspective on the events. We want to hear their stories and find out how they became torturers for those they should protect. Abu'Obayda Mohamed, known as OXDA, in his graphic shows the burning Khartoum, where the militia's attack on the sit-in on 3 June 2019 took place. The graphic was created a year later with a dedication to all the fallen and the shed blood on the dangerous road to democracy. Also, in 2021, the anniversary of the June 3 massacre was celebrated, emphasizing that the memory of these events is still alive, and the victims of the regime's violence will not be forgotten.

Even after the revolution, the role of the artists has not changed. On the contrary, the artists have gained more momentum, and they are using the newly acquired freedom. However, social and political change is a long process, and Sudan's future remains unknown. The economy is suffering from inflation and the continued devaluation of the Sudanese pound. The locust plague and the flood disaster hit agricultural production, and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the health crisis in the country. All this contributed to the deepening of the recession in 2020 and 2021. On the other hand, the U.S. removed Sudan from the list of states assisting terrorism and mediated the signing of a peace agreement with Israel, after which Sudan received \$ 1 billion in financial aid. The situation in Sudan will not change dramatically overnight, however, the government has proposed fuel subsidies and tax law reforms, as well as social protection programs. New fiscal and monetary policies were introduced while renewing diplomatic relations and attempts to stabilize the economic situation. Sudan is ready for fundamental economic and institutional reforms and the first changes have already been noticed in August 2021, when the inflation decreased by 35 points. International media were talking about stabilization in the country.

## **8. 2022 update. The conflict in Sudan is not over.**

In October 2021 the Sudanese army carried out a coup against the civilian leadership. Prime Minister Adballa Hamdook and his cabinet were arrested. Strikes broke out again and the actions of the army were condemned. This situation provoked a reaction from the international financial institutions supporting Sudan and forced the cessation of financial aid totaling \$4.6bn. Furthermore, \$700m of financial aid from the US has been blocked, along with the supply of grain to be used in subsidizing bread.<sup>92</sup> The cost of living began to rise dramatically, and inflation soared.

The Sudanese still protest against the military coup on a weekly basis. Currently carried out by professional groups, students, and women's rights groups. Protests still rely on non-violent tactics and the use of social media is still crucial for wider media coverage. The rise of local activism in Sudan is a phenomenon that continues to grow and reach even larger circles. Protests re-emerged and

Sudanese people demand a constitution and a democratically elected government.

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## Endnotes

1. Berridge, *Civil Uprising in Modern Sudan*, pp. 13-34. ↩
2. Deshayes, Etienne, and Medani, "Reflection on the Sudanese Revolutionary Dynamics." ↩
3. Bolatito, "Sudan Revolution." ↩
4. In 1964, the so-called 'Southern Problem' became the cause of the conflict. The increasing discrimination against the Christian South of Sudan was the result of the policy of Abbud's regime. A 'Southern problem' became widely discussed at the time, which led to clashes between students and the police at the University of Khartoum. A very important factor depending on the conflict was the government's ineffective economic policy and the rising costs of living. Eventually, the protests led to the president's resignation. ↩
5. Any newspaper under this law could be suspended without any court order and its employees arrested. ↩
6. CIPESA, "Sudan's Bad Laws." ↩
7. For more information see: Reporters without Borders, "Sudan: Press freedom still in transition a year after Omar al-Bashir's removal." ↩
8. Wilde Botta, "The Revolution Has Emerged." ↩
9. Copnall, *A Poisonous Thorn in Our Hearts*. ↩
10. [www.instagram.com/p/BtBLM5cFNG-/](https://www.instagram.com/p/BtBLM5cFNG-/) ↩
11. Karar, *Protesters Dismantling Modus Operandi of Sudan's Oppressor: ...the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the government adopted austerity measures that resulted in cutting fuel and bread subsidies. However, the adjustment plan has immensely hit the extremely poor, estimated to be around 36.1 per cent of the population. In December 2018, the inflation rate has risen to 72.94 per cent, the second worst rate worldwide after Venezuela.* ↩
12. Elhassan, "How Sudanese Art Is Fueling the Revolution." ↩

13. Berridge, *Civil Uprising in Modern Sudan*. ↩
14. Elhassan, "Sudan's Revolution Isn't a Fluke, It's Tradition." ↩
15. Ibid. ↩
16. Lamensch, "Sudan's Artists of the Revolution: An Interview with Mounir Khalil." ↩
17. Murray, "How Art Helped Propel Sudan's Revolution." ↩
18. Africa News, "Anti-Bashir Protesters Tear Gassed in Omdurman." ↩
19. Hassan and Kodouda, "Sudan's Uprising: The Fall of a Dictator," pp. 97-100. ↩
20. Häggström, "Art for the Revolution." ↩
21. Norbrook, "Sudan: Who Is Hemeti." ↩
22. Wilde Botta, *The Revolution has Emerged*. ↩
23. Human Rights Watch, "They Were Shouting 'Kill Them.'" ↩
24. Powell, *Sudan Constitutional Declaration: Draft Constitutional Charter for the 2019 Transitional Period*. ↩
25. Policy and military attacked sleeping protesters and destroy the site of the sit-in. People were shot and wounded by machetes and their bodies were thrown into the River Nile. For more information see: Physicians for Human Rights, "Chaos and Fire": An Analysis of Sudan's June 3, 2019, Khartoum Massacre." Videos made by protesters during the massacre (contains disturbing scenes): <http://bbc.com/news/av/worlds-africa-48956133> ↩
26. The Public Order Law was proposed in 1989 and created as a set of legal provisions from the Sudanese Criminal Law Act. A restrictive public law that controlled how women acted and dressed in public, violating their privacy and freedoms. Promotes discrimination against women and limits their social activities. For more information see: <http://democracyfirstgroup.org> ↩
27. Dabanga, "Prosecution Denounces Call to Revive Sudan's Repealed Public Order Law." ↩

28. Staff writer, “Sudan Just Criminalised Female Genital Mutilation in a Landmark Victory for Women.” Cartoon by Alaa Satir condemning FGM with a sign: female body cannot be edited, available: [www/https://www.instagram.com/p/BjHpWZjFxD9/](https://www.instagram.com/p/BjHpWZjFxD9/) ↵
29. Wilde Botta, *The Revolution Has Emerged*. ↵
30. Propaganda is not in the scope of this article, for more information on this matter see: Goldstein, “Exploiting Darfur Genocide for Propaganda.” ↵
31. Osman and Bearak, “Omar Al-Bashir Exploited Sudan’s Ethnic Division for Decades. Now Sudan Is United Against Him.” ↵
32. Bolatito, *Sudan Revolution*. ↵
33. Latif, *You Arrogant Racist, We are All Darfur’; Human Rights Protests as Nation-Building in Sudan*, pp. 54-67. ↵
34. Idris, *Conflict and Politics of Identity in Sudan*. ↵
35. Carmichael and Pinnell, “How Fake News from Sudan’s Regime Backfired.” ↵
36. Bishai and Elshami, “‘We Are All Darfur!’ – Sudan’s Unity Protests Stand a Real Chance.” ↵
37. Hashim, “In Pictures: The Art Fuelling Sudan’s Revolution.” ↵
38. For more information see: Reeves, “Online fake news and hate speech are fuelling tribal ‘genocide’ in South Sudan.” ↵
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41. Salih and Wilson, “Sudanese Women Take Lead in Protests Against Bashir.” ↵
42. Hendawi, “Sudan: An Artist’s Tribute to Women Leaders of the Pro-Democracy Movement.” ↵

43. For more information see: Salih, “I was raised to love our home”; Reilly, “The Iconic Photo of Her Helped Fuel Sudan’s Revolution.” ↔
44. Jaafari, “Here's the Story Behind the Iconic Image of the Sudanese Woman in White.” ↔
45. Brown, “History Stands Alongside the Woman in the White Tobe.” ↔
46. Elamin and Ismail, “The Many Mothers of Sudan’s Revolution.” ↔
47. Reilly, “The Iconic Photo of Her Helped Fuel Sudan's Revolution.” ↔
48. Lichtenstein, “Read the Scent of Revolution: The Story Behind Sudan's Legendary Perfume Label Remi .\* The information about the Amado Alfadni project is available here: [www/https://amadoalfadni.com/project/bint-el-sudan/](https://amadoalfadni.com/project/bint-el-sudan/) ↔
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55. Lamensch, “Sudan's Artists.” ↔
56. Häggström, “Art for the Revolution.” ↔
57. The Observateurs, “Brothers Create Mosaic Portraits of Protesters Killed in Sudan’s Revolution.” ↔
58. Anonymous, “We Are Fed up! The Power of a New Generation of Sudanese Youth Activists.” ↔
59. UK Home Office, “Sudan Opposition to the Government.” ↔

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62. Hassab, "Sudan Uprising: On an Artistic Note." ↔
63. [www/https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-africa-48956133](https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-africa-48956133) ↔
64. Robathan and Pearce, "The Satir Sisters." ↔
65. Elhassan, "Inside Sudan's Viral Revolution." ↔
66. Gaafar and Shakwat, "Sudanese Women at the Heart of the Revolution." ↔
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80. Hashim, "In pictures: The art fuelling Sudan's revolution." ↩
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82. Roychoudhury, "The Art of Resistance." ↩
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90. [www/http://sudanrevolutionart.org](http://sudanrevolutionart.org) ↩
91. Kordofani, "Kejer's Prison." ↩
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