



A quantitative and qualitative analysis:  
**Media coverage of  
the Darfur conflict in  
Sudanese and  
non-Sudanese media**

REPORT

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**Contributing Organisations:**

Amman Community Net – Jordan  
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) – Egypt  
International Media Support (IMS) – Denmark  
Osservatorio di Pavia – Italy

Front cover photo:

**Mideast Sudan Darfur**

"A truck loaded with new refugees enters Zamzam refugee camp, outside the Darfur town of al-Fasher, Sudan Thursday, March 19, 2009. Tens of thousands newly displaced Sudanese have arrived at the over crowded refugee camp of Zamzam in the last several weeks. Meanwhile the Sudanese government ordered the expulsion of 13 international aid organizations and three domestic groups after the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for President Omar al-Bashir."  
(AP Photo/Nasser Nasser)

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**Contributing Organisations:**





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# 1 Introduction

The need for information during any time of conflict or crisis is crucial not only for those directly affected but also for those involved and engaged from outside the affected area. The need for information of the Darfur conflict is no exception. Indeed, Darfur is often cited as one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters but it is also one of the most complex. Considering, that mass media often is a main source of information in relation to a given conflict and its development it will be useful to examine what type of media coverage has been afforded the conflict by the media. In particular, it will be relevant to examine the coverage by the Sudanese media as well as by media in a number of Arab countries (in this report referred to as non-Sudanese media). Indeed, such an analysis will give basic knowledge of the quality and quantity of news and information made available, as well as provide some insight as why resolution to this conflict proves so elusive.

The coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for example, garners endless hours and pages of news coverage but it would seem, at first blush, that this is far from the case for Darfur. And if indeed this is the case then one must ask the question why. Thus, in order to ascertain whether this is the case, a content analysis of non-Sudanese and Sudanese media coverage of the Darfur conflict has been undertaken.

The main goal of the project was to analyze the quality of the communication in the non-Sudanese and Sudanese media through quantitative and qualitative analysis of the content of select media outlets, both electronic and print, regarding the Darfur crisis. Content analysis has been combined with evaluations expressed by the journalists. In this manner, the project aims at providing an analytic snapshot of how the selected media in the chosen period described the Darfur crisis with a view to improving the quality of this coverage.

The quality of media coverage of Darfur crisis, as noticed during the monitoring period, is conditioned not only by factors related to the crisis itself but also to general attitudes and preferences of Arab media. It is therefore important to look at the development of the crisis in general, and their most recent developments in particular, and then to have a look at the environment in which the Arab media are working and how their editorial policies reflect their attitudes, priorities and interests to understand and interpret their coverage of the Darfur crisis.

The assessment of the coverage can illustrate a powerful instrument able to increase the dialogue and the responsiveness on the Sudanese humanitarian crisis and to foster media awareness regarding their responsibility in defining the how the Darfur conflict is perceived by the public.

Additionally, it is hoped that this study will not only provide a basis for dialogue with media institutions across the region, but will also enhance awareness among editors and journalists in non-Sudanese and Sudanese media and contribute to policy reforms related to provision of humanitarian information to the population in Darfur.

Finally, and considering that media content analysis in combination with interviews with editors and journalists is a method little used in the Arab region as well as in Sudan, it is hoped that this study can inspire to the use of this methodology as a tool in better understanding the media and its role in society as well as means for assessing and enhancing the work of the media.

Several institutions were involved in gathering and analysing the data for this report. The Osservatorio di Pavia developed the methodology for the media content analysis and trained and supervised the monitoring team. The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies organized the quantitative and qualitative monitoring of the media content. Amman Community Net carried out the interviews with journalists and editors. International Media Support was responsible for the overall management of the project and the final editing of the report. All organisations contributed to the analysis of the data. Additionally, Khartoum Centre for Human Rights and Environmental Development contributed to the overall design of the project.

The reporting team included:

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies : *Ashraf Rady, Ragab Saad, Moataz El Fegiery*

International Media Support: *Michelle Betz, Finn Rasmussen*

Osservatorio di Pavia: *Koshin Aden*

Amman Community Net: *Sawsan Zaidah, Mohammad Amer*

Khartoum Centre for Human Rights and Environmental Development:  
*Faisal El Bagir*

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## 2 Executive summary

The media coverage of the Darfur crisis is limited and the non-Sudanese (Arab) media does not give any significant priority to the crisis; rather they cover the crisis as they would cover any other crisis in the African region. Meanwhile, the Sudanese media provide more substantial coverage of the Darfur crisis than their non-Sudanese peers.

The content analysis demonstrates that the crisis is first and foremost framed in a political dimension with the crisis framed as a political struggle between local Sudanese actors, and a struggle between the Sudanese government and the international community. This trend is underlined by the scope applied by the media in that they frequently focus on the international implications of the crisis as opposed to viewing the crisis with a local Sudanese context.

The crisis in Darfur is also framed as a humanitarian issue, stressing that the crisis is caused by external factors such as the international community instead of local causes. This is furthermore underlined by the topics covered, where stories focusing on the refugees, for example, are very few, especially in the non-Sudanese media and the Sudanese state-controlled electronic media. The refugees and other victims of the conflict are losing out in the media coverage in large part because when humanitarian issues are covered they tend to lean become politicized.

Only on rare occasions are the victims used as direct sources in the news stories. Instead, Sudanese government sources are prevalent in the news stories. Likewise, it is government officials that stand out as one of the main protagonists in the news coverage.

The use of language in covering the Darfur crisis is relatively balanced and sensitive. Still, the media content analysis indicates that some media, and in particular the Sudanese written press, use terms which lean towards special interpretations of conflict, using terms such as 'genocide', 'ethnic cleansing'; and 'human catastrophe'.

The content analysis shows, that few media platforms offer a balanced debate between different positions to the crisis. Although there is no long tradition for debates in the Arab and Sudanese media, this stands out as a particular problem in relation to the complexity of the crisis in Darfur.

Interviews with journalists and editors indicate that lack of resources prevents many Arab media outlets from sending or maintaining correspondents in Darfur. Thus, instead of using first-hand sources, many outlets seek alternative sources of information, most commonly Sudanese government authorities.

Additionally, the deteriorating security situation has played a role in limiting the ability of journalists to move in the Darfur region which is one of the most dangerous regions for journalists globally. The practice of restricting and persecuting journalists reveals that the authorities and the rebels also play an important role in shaping the media images they want to see published around the world.

For its part, the Sudanese government exercises control over the media coverage, whether local or regional. It prohibits the work of journalists without prior security authorization, identifies where authorized journalists can go and prohibits journalists from going to other places, most often the refugee camps.

The local Sudanese media talk about pre-censorship, press laws and prosecutions based on security reasons post-publication. Meanwhile, the non-Sudanese (Arab) media complain that the Sudanese authorities conceal and manipulate information. Finally, the rebels in Sudan have also imposed restrictions on journalists' freedom in areas controlled by rebel factions.

Media coverage of Darfur has also been affected by internal elements. For example, the absence of a clear editorial policy for many of the media outlets covering the Darfur situation has increased the difficulty of accurate reporting and the ineffectiveness of their new product. In the absence of a clear editorial policy, the work is carried out mechanically and coverage overlaps the political and the humanitarian, the national and the regional, all at the expense of professionalism. In addition to the lack of clarity in such editorial policy, there is scarcity in the number of journalists who are trained to cover the conflicts in general and the crisis in Darfur in particular.Xxxx

These factors together produce media coverage of Darfur that fluctuates in volume and quality and which most Sudanese and non-Sudanese (Arab) media themselves admit as unsatisfactory.

Based upon these findings, as well as a round table meeting with media representatives, the following recommendations have been identified:

- Provide conflict sensitive journalism training to journalists as well as to editors and other gatekeepers so all involved in the process are on the same page;
- Engage Sudanese authorities and parties involved in the conflict in dialogue regarding the media; in particular in relation to providing access to Darfur, ensuring the safety of journalists in Darfur; and resist from controlling and censoring media content
- Promote that the Sudanese and the Arab media adhere to objectivity, credibility, accuracy and balance in the coverage of Darfur conflict and upholding professional ethics.
- Encourage that the Sudanese and the Arab media give more attention to the conflict in Darfur and to human rights issues with interest and concern for the coverage in the field.
- Assist news outlets to ensure they have clear editorial policies regarding Darfur and conflict in general;
- Encourage journalists to seek out alternative sources of information; and,
- Encourage media organizations to pool resources and build cooperation for coverage of Darfur, thus enabling resources to stretch further.

## 3 Methodology

The overall objective of this media monitoring project is to analyse the quality and quantity of the news coverage in the Arab media regarding the Darfur crisis in order to get a clearer picture not only of the words used (written or spoken), but also of the images and the evaluations expressed by the journalists through scientific instruments (content analysis), thus obtaining a snapshot of how the selected media in the chosen period described the Darfur crisis.<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, the project aims to enhance awareness among editors and journalists in non-Sudanese and Sudanese media through a process of interviews and consultations on their perception of the coverage of the Darfur crisis and their reflections on the media content monitoring results.

The project's methodology included the following elements:

1. Monitor media content in selected media
2. Interview a selection of journalists and editors from the media that were monitored
3. Roundtable which discussed findings from media content monitoring and interviews and developed options for media support.

### Media monitoring

The monitored media included a cross-section of Arab (non-Sudanese) and Sudanese media, in total 21 media outlets, both print and electronic (radio and TV) from both Sudan and a number of Arab countries.<sup>2</sup> The monitored period was 20 November to 20 December 2007. Newspapers were analysed daily and there was no pre-selection of material. For television and radio the main news editions and current events programmes were analysed. The monitoring methodology was developed by Osservatorio di Pavia. The monitoring took place in Cairo by a team of monitors organised by Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), and trained and supervised by Osservatorio di Pavia.

This study assessed the content of the journalistic coverage of Darfur crisis in a sample of news bulletins, TV and radio programmes and in the press. It was based on a content analysis of the news stories related to Darfur in the daily papers and television newscast and other relevant programmes. For television and radio news this was between 16:00–24:00 hrs daily and newspapers daily. The content was coded according to both quantitative and qualitative variables.

### Interviews

In addition to the content analysis, qualitative interviews were carried out with a select group of journalists and editors from the media that were monitored. These interviews were conducted with eleven media outlets' representatives. Due to the prohibitive cost of conducting interviews in person, the interviews were done by telephone. The interviews were conducted January – March 2008 and were recorded, transcribed and then edited according to topic. The interviews were based on open-ended questions which varied from one interviewee to another according to the nature of their media outlet (non-Sudanese or Sudanese, local or regional). All the questions aimed to

<sup>1</sup> For a complete description of the project methodology please see Annex I.

<sup>2</sup> For a complete description of the monitored media see the description in Chapter 6 "Findings from the Media Coverage".

find an answer to one major question: What factors determine that particular organization's coverage of the Darfur crisis? The interviews were carried out by Amman Community Net based in Jordan.

**Roundtable**

A roundtable was organized in Amman, Jordan by Amman Community Net in August 2008. During this roundtable the preliminary findings of the studies were presented to a group of 11 journalists and editors mainly working at the media represented in the monitored sample. The participants produced a set of recommendations for enhancing the coverage of the Darfur crisis based upon the outcome of the roundtable. These recommendations are outlined in section 9 of this report.

## 4 The crisis in Darfur

The crisis in Sudan's western region of Darfur is described by the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations as one of the world's worst humanitarian crisis. But the conflict, which began in February 2003, is also one of the most complex conflicts in the world. Darfur is the epicenter of three overlapping circles of conflict. First and foremost, there is the six-year-old war between the Darfur rebel movements and the government, which is part of the breakdown between Sudan's centre in Khartoum, which controls wealth and political power and the marginalized peripheries. Secondly, there are localized conflicts, primarily centered on land tensions between sedentary and nomadic tribes. Finally, the Darfur conflict has triggered a proxy war that Chad and Sudan are fighting by hosting and supporting the other's rebel groups. International interests have added to the difficulty in resolving the conflict.

Darfur (which means 'land of the *Fur*', one of the larger tribes in the region) has faced many years of tension over land and grazing rights between the mostly nomadic Arabs and farmers from the *Fur*, *Zaghawa* and *Masalit* communities. In an Arab-dominated country (the largest country in Africa), Darfur's population is mostly black African.

Drought and desertification in the 1970s and 1980s led to fights over the already scarce resources particularly between cattle herders and agriculturalists. At that time there was also increased immigration to the fertile areas of Darfur from neighboring Chad and Libya.

According to a 2005 UN report "in addition to the tribal feuds resulting from desertification, the availability of modern weapons, and the ... deep layers relating to identity, governance, and the emergence of armed rebel movements which enjoy popular support amongst certain tribes, are playing a major role in shaping the current crisis."<sup>3</sup>

In 2003, two rebel groups, SLA (Sudan Liberation Army) and JEM (Justice and Equality Movement), launched raids against Sudanese government installations in the region saying they wanted greater representation for Darfur in peace talks between North and South Sudan. These groups represent primarily agrarian farmers who are mostly non-Arab black African Muslims from a number of different tribes.

The government was caught by surprise by the attacks and had few troops in the region. In response, it mounted both a conventional military response (mostly in the form of aerial bombardment) and the mobilization of local militias drawn mainly from herder populations which have come to be known as the *Janjaweed*.

<sup>3</sup> Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur to the United Nations Secretary-General, 25 January 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur to the United Nations Secretary-General, 25 January 2005.

According to the UN, "the rebellion came at a particularly inopportune time [for the government], as it was in the process of intense peace negotiations with the SPLM/A, and negotiations were advancing rapidly"<sup>4</sup> referring to negotiations with the Sudan's People Liberation Movement/Army, the former rebellious movement in South of Sudan.

Fighting was characterized by extensive violence against civilians, their homes and properties. The complexity of ethnic tensions in Darfur should not be

over-simplified. The combatants in Darfur are almost exclusively Muslim unlike in the civil war between the North and South of Sudan. More than two million people fled their homes. Refugees and some western observers said there was a deliberate attempt to drive black Africans out of Darfur.

In June 2004, the African Union deployed a small ceasefire monitoring team of 7,000. Their mission was to protect military observers monitoring a temporary ceasefire between the Sudanese government and rebel forces; their mandate did not allow for protection of civilians.

Later that year, the UN Security Council moved to support a UN peacekeeping force to supplement the African Union mission, finally approving in mid-2007 a 26,000 troop peacekeeping force to augment the AU observer mission. The current UNAMID (joint United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur) force comprises 15,000 UNAMID personnel including 12,000 troops and 2,400 police.

Securing peace in the region has been elusive. Successive peace agreements have ended in failure and there continues to be disagreement between the various factions as to what they want from negotiations. While the divided SLA primarily wants more compensation for the displaced and power sharing, JEM continues to argue for realignment of national political structures, including decentralization to create a strong federal system that replicates southern Sudan's autonomous regional government nationwide. The first Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) was signed in 2006 by the Government of Sudan and the leader of one of the two SLM factions, but was rejected by JEM and the leader of the other SLM faction. Lack of genuine cooperation from the Sudanese government, combined with splits within the international community and the insufficient legitimacy of the rebel groups signing the agreement are some of the reasons for the failure of the agreement. Additionally, the media coverage of the negotiations has been criticized for disseminating inadequate information and spreading rumours, and thereby adding negatively to the process.<sup>5</sup>

Other efforts have been spearheaded by the U.S. and the European Union (EU) as well as the AU and UN. The latest was a "Declaration of Intent" signed by the Sudanese government and JEM in February 2009.

It is believed that almost 5 million people have been affected by the Darfur conflict and the UN has described the situation in the region as one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. However, because much of Darfur has been inaccessible to aid workers and researchers precise numbers are impossible to know. It is estimated that some 300,000 people have died from combined effects of war, famine and disease, at least another 2 million are internally displaced and more than 200,000 have fled to Chad.

In mid-2005, the International Criminal Court looked into human rights violations in Darfur and two years later the ICC issued arrest warrants for crimes against humanity and war crimes against former Minister of State for the Interior of the Government of Sudan and current Minister of State for Humanitarian Affairs, Ahmad Harun, and *Janjaweed* commander Ali Muhammed Ali Abd-al-Rahman.

In mid 2008, the ICC's prosecutor filed 10 charges against the Sudanese president Al-Bashir: three counts of genocide, five of crimes against humanity and two of murder and in March 2009 the ICC issued an arrest warrant for Al-Bashir for war crimes and crimes against humanity. In response, the Sudanese government expelled 13 international NGOs and closed down 3 Suda-

<sup>5</sup> This issue was discussed at the conference "The conflict in Darfur and civilians protection" held in Cairo 29-30 January 2007.

nese relief organizations. Many believe that this could trigger an even more severe humanitarian crisis in Darfur.

These recent developments show that the crisis in Darfur is more likely to deteriorate and lead to more human suffering.

## 5 The Arab and Sudanese media environment

The media environment in Sudan and the Arab World is shaped by political, social, economic and legal factors thereby influencing the way they cover the conflict in Darfur. Although the Arab and Sudanese media witnessed a technological "revolution" and an explosion in media outlets in the last decade, there continue to be traditions and practices that continue from the previous eras of government-controlled media. With few exceptions, newsgathering in the Western sense is nonexistent, especially in state-controlled media outlets. Instead of field reporting, interviews, studio discussions and broad news coverage, viewers are provided a studio-delivered digest of "protocol" news - mainly government bulletins of the official state activities and speeches of the day.

Scholars participating in a seminar on Arab media<sup>6</sup> agreed that Arab media have limited freedom but ironically were most free in American-occupied Iraq and in Israel-occupied Palestine. It was stated that reporting by the Arab media is heavily influenced by the political context in which they emerged and operate; indeed, it is a common pattern across the Arab world that the media reflect the political context and even the ethnic divisions of the political landscape.

Editors and senior staff in media outlets often gain their position by having close ties with the ruling elite thereby ensuring their interests are protected with the resulting focus on the importance and dominance of the central government.

Moreover, new patterns of self-censorship are appearing. Arab media, particularly the Arab satellite channels, operate on an "anywhere but here" model, engaging in detailed reporting of events outside their host countries but being careful to avoid controversial reporting on domestic occurrences. Such censorship is often encouraged and enforced by editorial staff.

It should not be assumed that privately owned media are independent or produce high quality journalism. Even for privately owned media, investigative reporting is extremely difficult due to the lack of legal protections for journalists and their sources.

The Sudanese media face more challenges compared to media in other Arab countries in terms of the legal framework and professionalism. There is a dire need for legal reform in the area of freedom of expression and access to information. At the national level, new media laws produced and presented to Parliament show no improvement over the existing laws. Objective and relevant reporting is a challenge for many Sudanese newspapers. There is also a highly politicized environment in the Sudanese media sector with a significant part of the media operating within a set political frame, pursuing political goals with a desire to influence public opinion and decision making.

Sudanese journalists are easy prey for a government which uses and abuses draconian legislation and nationalism tinged with religion and also exploits the region's conflicts to justify repression. Additionally, there have been a number of incidents of intimidation and barely-veiled threats directed against foreign reporters in Darfur and Khartoum.

<sup>6</sup> Nyron Burke, *Arab Media, "Power and Influence: Conference co-sponsored by Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University.* [http://www.wilson.princeton.edu/research/special\\_reports/ArabMedia.pdf](http://www.wilson.princeton.edu/research/special_reports/ArabMedia.pdf)

Despite these harassments, intimidation and the targeting of journalists in Sudan, the Sudanese print media are relatively free and represent different political groups from the left to the Islamists. The situation is completely different with regards to the electronic media which are entirely controlled by the state.

New technologies have given rise to new patterns of regional media that are generally beyond national governments' direct control. The first technological leap was the international Arabic newspapers edited in London and printed remotely in major world capitals using satellite communications. These papers have also emerged as an important intellectual outlet for the region. More recently, the 1990s witnessed the rise of Arab satellite television stations that challenged traditional state monopolies over television. However, some scholars still believe that the most important variable influencing the political role of media channels in the Arab world is the national political system in which they operate.<sup>7</sup>

While information and communications revolutions changed the media environment in the Arab world, these changes vary from one country to another and are often based on the legal framework that regulates the media, especially in accessing information for media practitioners as well as for other civil society representatives. As noted in a recent study<sup>8</sup> on the Sudanese media, there are at present no laws assuring access to information. This is true also of other countries in the region.

7 "Do National political systems still influence Arab media?", *Arab Media and Society*, May 2007. [http://arabmediasociety.sqgd.co.uk/topics/index.php?t\\_article=143](http://arabmediasociety.sqgd.co.uk/topics/index.php?t_article=143)

8 International Media Support, "Media in Sudan at a crossroads: Assessment and outline of a strategy for media support", Copenhagen November 2007.

## 6 Findings from media content analysis

### 6.1 Introduction

The section will present the findings from the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the media content.

The study's findings suggest that there were indeed differences in the way the Darfur conflict was covered by Sudanese versus non-Sudanese media. Additionally, there were differences in how the story was portrayed in the print versus the electronic media. This section will highlight some of these findings.

This study examined coverage of the Darfur conflict in the following media outlets during the period from November 20, 2007 through December 20, 2007:

#### **Non-Sudanese Media<sup>9</sup>**

##### *Print Media*

Al-Hayat (London)  
Al-Ittihad (United Arab Emirates)  
Al-Sharq al-Awsat (London, England)  
Al-Ahram (Egypt)  
Al-Masry al-Youm (Egypt)  
Al-Aosboa (Egypt)  
Al-Nahar (Lebanon)

##### *Broadcast Media*

Al-Arabiya TV (Dubai)  
Abu Dhabi TV (Abu Dhabi )  
Al-Jazeera TV (Qatar)  
Nile TV News (Egypt)  
LBC TV (Lebanon)  
Al-Libiya TV (Libya)

#### **Sudanese Media**

##### *Print Media*

Ray al-Shaab  
Al-Sahafa  
Al-Intibaha  
Al-Ayam  
Al-Ray Al-Aam  
Al-Sudani

##### *Broadcast Media*

Al-Sudani TV  
Um Dorman Radio

Not surprisingly, the coverage of the Darfur crisis in the Sudanese media differed significantly from that of the non-Sudanese media not only qualitatively but also quantitatively in that most of the coverage of the Darfur crisis was in the Sudanese media. The limited extent of non-Sudanese coverage may suggest that Darfur might not be considered an Arab "cause" like the Iraq war or the Palestinian conflict.

<sup>9</sup> Non-Sudanese media refer to those Arabic-language media monitored not located in Sudan but rather based in UAE, Qatar, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya and the UK.

**Table 1** *Electronic media: coverage by country*

Country	Time (seconds)	Time (% seconds)
Sudan	36122	66,2%
UAE	11774	21,6%
Qatar	5013	9,2%
Egypt	1461	2,7%
Lebanon	160	0,3%
Libya	55	0,1%
<i>Total</i>	54585 (15:09:45)	100,0%

**Table 2** *Print media: coverage by country*

Country	Space (cm <sup>2</sup> )	Space (% cm <sup>2</sup> )
Sudan	175223,5	87,4%
United Kingdom	15689	7,8%
UAE	5653	2,8%
Egypt	3598	1,8%
Lebanon	315	0,2%
<i>Total</i>	200478,5	100,0%

It is important to note that Sudanese electronic media (TV and radio) are state-controlled media and not independent such as those monitored from other countries.

Monitoring of the broadcast media shows that just over 15 hours of coverage were dedicated to the Darfur crisis, with approximately two-thirds of this time originating from Sudanese radio and television.

Though its coverage was more limited compared with the Sudanese, the non-Sudanese media did report the main developments of the crisis during the monitored period, however, the non-Sudanese media paid more attention to international and regional developments related to the crisis and less to the local and domestic details which were the main focus of the Sudanese printed media.

The print media coverage of the Darfur crisis is equal to 200478.5cm<sup>2</sup>, most of which was found in the Sudanese newspapers with almost half of the coverage found in two Sudanese newspapers: *Ray al-Shaab* and *Al-Sahafa* (Table 4).

**Table 3** *Electronic media: coverage by media outlet*

<i>Title media outlet</i>	<i>Time (seconds)</i>	<i>Time(% seconds)</i>	<i>Number of news items</i>
Um Durman Radio (Sudan)	18689	34,2%	351
Al-Sudani TV (Sudan)	17433	31,9%	211
Al-Arabiya TV (Dubai)	6195	11,3%	44
Abu Dhabi TV (Abu Dhabi)	5579	10,2%	31
Al-Jazeera TV (Qatar)	5013	9,2%	50
Nile TV News (Egypt)	1461	2,7%	48
LBC TV (Lebanon)	160	0,3%	17
Al-Libiya TV (Libya)	55	0,1%	20
<i>Total</i>	<i>54585 (15:09:45)</i>	<i>100,0%</i>	<i>772</i>

**Table 4** Print media: coverage by media outlet

Title media outlet	Space (cm2)	Space (% cm2)	Number of news items
Ray al-Shaab (Sudan)	51917,5	25,9%	622
Al-Sahafa (Sudan)	36637	18,3%	517
Al-Intibaha (Sudan)	24053	12,0%	374
Al-Ayam (Sudan)	22950	11,4%	418
Al-Ray Al-Aam(Sudan)	20211	10,1%	441
Al-Sudani (Sudan)	19185	9,6%	424
Al-Hayat (UK)	9909	4,9%	92
Al-Ittihad. (UAE)	6007	3,0%	97
Al-Sharq al-Awsat (UK)	5570	2,8%	78
Al-Ahram (Egypt)	1514	0,8%	60
Al-Masry al-Youm (Egypt)	1319	0,7%	53
Al-Aosboa (Egypt)	891	0,4%	22
Al-Nahar (Lebanon)	315	0,2%	34
<i>Total</i>	<i>200478,5</i>	<i>100,0%</i>	<i>3232</i>

It is interesting to note that despite Libyan mediation in the Darfur crisis the Libyan satellite channel, *Al-Libiya*, accounted for the least amount of coverage. Its coverage accounts for only 0.1% of the total time allocated by the monitored electronic media and the channel broadcast only five reports during the monitored period and these focused mainly on diplomatic activities.

## 6.2 Topics

There were several newsworthy events that took place during the monitored period including: the issue of kidnapped children, the preparation to deploy the United Nations/African Union hybrid force, the International Criminal Court proceedings against Sudanese officials, political developments and armed clashes in Darfur. These topics were represented in more detail in the Sudanese press which dealt with the conflict in Darfur as a domestic matter (Table 5).

**Table 5** Significant events during the monitored period

<i>Date</i>	<i>Significant events during the monitored period</i>	<i>Covered by Sudanese Media</i>	<i>Covered by Non-Sudanese media</i>
23 November 2007	The Sudanese Government said it would accept only troops from China, Egypt and India as part of the peace-keeping force in Darfur	X	✓
26 November 2007	Clashes within the Darfuri rebel group SLM and the Sudanese security authorities in Khartoum	✓	X
26 November 2007	Sudanese-Chadian tensions	✓	X
26 November 2007	International report released on the escalation of the conflict in Darfur and the threat from JEM to the Chinese troops	X	✓
27 November 2007	Children kidnapped from Sudanese refugee camps in Chad	✓	X
6 December 2007	ICC Public Prosecutor called the UN Security Council to ask Sudan to hand over the two suspects in leading roles in crimes in West Darfur	X	✓
7 December 2007	UN General Secretary representative and Sudanese President Al-Bashir meet during the Euro-African summit in Lisbon	X	✓
11 December 2007	Libyan President Moammar al Qaddafi statement on Darfur during his visit to France on 11 December	X	✓
14 December 2007	Interviewed Sadeg Almahdi, an opposition leader and former prime minister in Sudan	X	✓

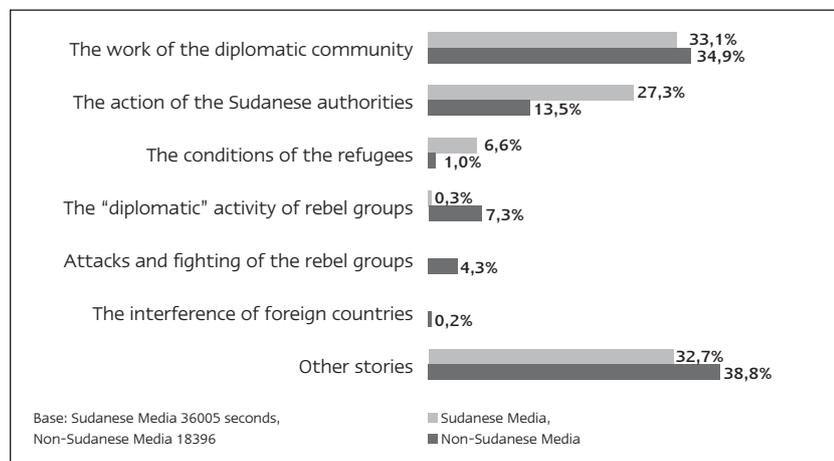
An analysis of the topics from the predefined categories covered by the electronic and the print media (Tables 6 and 7) shows that two topics dominate all the coverage regardless of whether print or electronic, Sudanese or non-Sudanese. These topics were: "the work of the diplomatic community" and "the action of the Sudanese authorities".

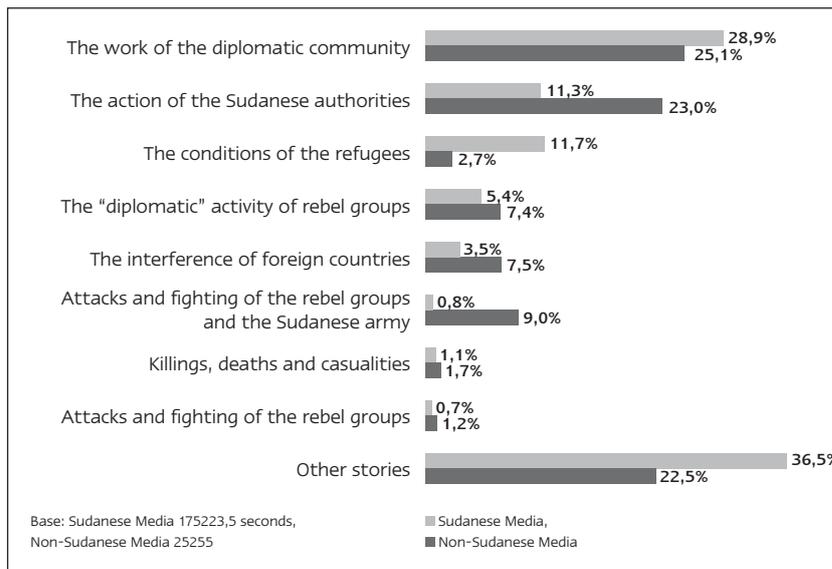
The "work of the diplomatic community" included events and stories such as the work of the international community in Sudan including mediation attempts, hosting peace talks and other diplomatic negotiations as well as the workings of the International Criminal Court.

For example, all the monitored electronic media covered the arrival of Chinese forces and were particularly keen to mention that the force was part of the engineering corps (rather than strictly military related). These media also highlighted the ICC public prosecutor's call for the UN Security Council to ask Sudan to hand over two Sudanese suspects. The importance that is given to this issue and the emphasis on the political developments of diplomatic negotiations indicate that Darfur is seen as a matter which mainly relates to the international community and has few implications at the local level.

The category "action of the Sudanese authorities" includes coverage of Sudanese government officials as they may be engaged in activities surrounding the Darfur conflict. In this case, the Sudanese print media tended to cover the actions of the Sudanese authorities less than their colleagues of Sudanese electronic media. This could well be attributed to the fact that the broadcast media in Sudan are state-controlled and tend to focus to a great extent on the work of the authorities.

**Table 6** *Electronic media: news topic by Sudanese media and non-Sudanese media*



**Table 7** Print media: news topic by the Sudanese media and non-Sudanese media

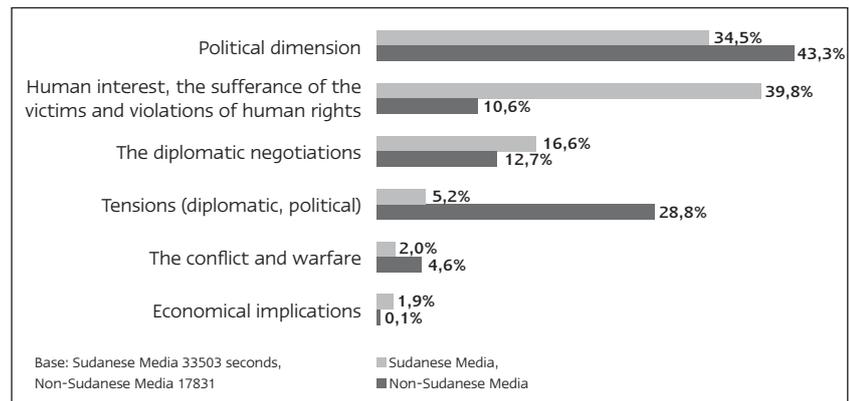
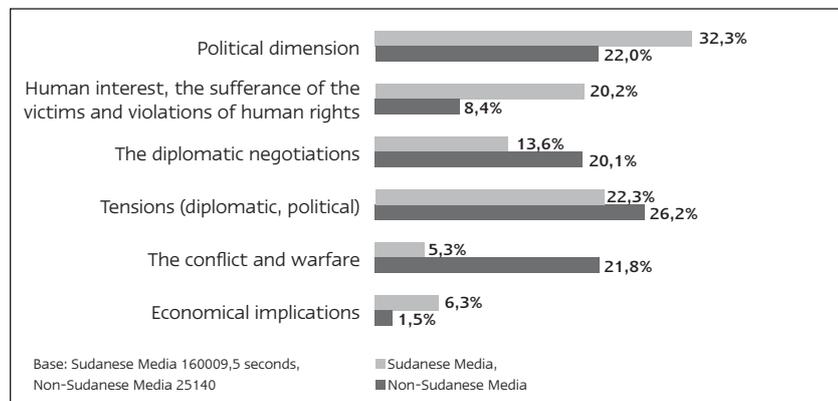
In relation to the topics covered in the electronic media, there is a clear indication that issues dealing with the refugees and their conditions garnered very little attention, especially from the non-Sudanese media. However, the Sudanese print media did give more attention to refugee and human interest stories.

In both electronic and printed media there was little coverage of the rebel groups. This might suggest either difficulty in accessing such sources or a predefined bias on the part of the journalists who deemed the rebel groups not worthy of coverage deciding instead to cover the "official" Sudan part of the story.

### 6.3 Framing

It is important to examine how a news story is framed and contextualized. Essentially, framing suggests the parameters in which a story is told; communications scholar Robert Entman believes that "framing essentially involves selection and salience". Examining framing allows one to discern what the journalist's perceived reality was and how this affected the storytelling.

The Darfur crisis is first and foremost framed in a political dimension. This is the case with both electronic and print media (Tables 8 and 9) although it is primarily the non-Sudanese media that frame the conflict as a political one. This underlines that the crisis is not only a political struggle between local Sudanese actors (internally within Sudan) but also extends beyond Sudanese boundaries to become an external struggle between the Sudanese government and the international community. Further, both electronic and print non-Sudanese media also frequently frame the news on the Darfur crisis as one involving diplomatic and political tensions.

**Table 8** *Electronic media: framing of the story by Sudanese media and non-Sudanese media***Table 9** *Print media: framing of the story by the Sudanese media and non-Sudanese media*

The fact that in most cases stories were framed as political stories may, in part, be explained by the fact that the Arab media in general are rather politicized. This politicization is due to the highly politicized and conflict-prone nature of the region and the fact that in many Arab countries the best-funded media are state media.

While the political dimensions are most prevalent this becomes even more so if the categories of diplomatic negotiations and tensions (diplomatic, political) are included; they are, after all, essentially part and parcel of the political dimensions.

While the frame is most often political, the crisis is also framed as a humanitarian issue. It is particularly interesting to note that conflict, considered a traditional news value in the West, was far down on the list. This takes on added interest if one considers the relatively high numbers of human interest stories dealing with Darfur yet somehow it would seem that these stories are told without any reference to war or conflict. The use of human interest framing is mainly applied by the Sudanese media when dealing with the suffering of victims or human rights violations. Indeed, while the percentage of human interest stories in the Sudanese electronic media is 39.8 percent, it is worthy to note that human interest issues were covered in different programming formats almost daily during the monitored period.

The most recurrent example of this kind of framing is the Sudanese media coverage of the issue of the children kidnapped from Sudanese refugee camps in Chad. This issue was reported in the Sudanese electronic and print media in a way that appeared to place Western humanitarian groups working in Darfur in a bad light.

The Sudanese electronic media (state-controlled) tended to focus more on humanitarian issues and human suffering but in Table 10 their scope is international. Indeed, the emphasis on the international further gives the impression that the conflict does not have local causes but rather external. The Sudanese electronic media covered the crisis as an internal problem which some international powers were trying to exploit as a way of targeting Khartoum. One example was the special attention the Sudanese electronic media (state media) paid to the coverage of the kidnapped children from Sudanese refugee camps in Chad.

*Um Durman Radio* dealt with Darfur as if there were no crisis and noted that life in Darfur was "normal" albeit with some difficulties. For example, on 2 December 2007, a program entitled *Hssad Al-youm* (Harvest of the Day) included a report about the Sudanese budget and the budget allocation for Darfur. On 9 December, a radio program called *Assalam: haqai'q wa arqam* (Peace: facts and figures), discussed a fund for development and reconstruction in Darfur and preparations for the *Hejj* (pilgrimage). These and other programs suggested that all was normal in Darfur.

The coverage of non-Sudanese electronic media was framed as humanitarian in very few cases. Egyptian Nile TV had the most (three) humanitarian stories. On 30 November, Nile reported in a news bulletin that UN officials were warning against the deterioration of security in Darfur. On 2 December, they reported that the UN Humanitarian Affairs Commissioner was looking for more cooperation in Sudan. Finally, on 20 December, in a TV magazine program called "Africa", Nile reported the activities of humanitarian organizations in Africa including Sudan and Darfur.

*Abu Dhabi TV* also paid some attention to humanitarian affairs. On 1 December in a news bulletin, it reported that the UN felt its humanitarian efforts were being hindered and in a news program that the UN put emphasis on the necessity of using helicopters to conduct humanitarian efforts. *Al-Arabyia*, on 1 December, broadcast an interview with the ICC Persecutor who talked about the humanitarian situation in the region.

It should be noted, however, that while there was some humanitarian coverage by non-Sudanese electronic media it was most often mixed with political issues.

The manner in which the print media framed the stories differs quite a bit from their broadcast colleagues. In part, this could suggest the reliance on visuals and sound for broadcast which journalists simply would not have had access to thus dictating to some extent what they could cover. Print, on the other hand, does not face these same limiting factors. The print media devoted more space to the coverage of political and diplomatic tensions (difficult to tell such a story visually) while they devoted less space than broadcast to humanitarian issues. This could suggest that broadcast had access to visuals perhaps that NGOs or others working in the field had made available, thus making the story more appealing for TV, for example.

The coverage of the print media also reveals differences between Sudanese and non-Sudanese outlets in terms of humanitarian framing. The Sudanese

print media published stories that directly focused on the humanitarian suffering in Darfur and in refugee camps. For example, *Al-Ayam* published a report about the deteriorating conditions of the Darfuri refugees in Chad. A similar story was published in *Ray al-Shaab*, a daily opposition newspaper, on 9 December.

But while the Sudanese press published more stories that were framed as humanitarian, the majority of these stories were about the children kidnapped from refugee camps in Chad. The Sudanese newspapers, regardless of whether governmental, opposition or independent, focused on this issue in a way that negatively portrayed foreign NGOs. For example, the daily independent *Al-Sudani*, reported on 23 November that some Sudanese were involved in kidnapping children from refugees camps. It reported again on 29 November that some Sudanese helped a French organization in kidnapping the children.

Other reports focused on the killing of women. For example, the state-controlled daily, *Al-Ray Al-Aam*, and *Al-Intibaha* both reported in early December that the Sudanese authorities accused some Western NGOs of killing women and draining their blood in Western Darfur. Two weeks later, on 17 December, *Ray al-Shaab* published a report about abuses against women in Darfur.

At the Pan-Arab level, *Al-Hayat* newspaper paid more attention to humanitarian issues compared to *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*. Nationally, the print media in Egypt and the United Arab Emirates also published stories that could be framed as humanitarian. For example, on 9 December the Egyptian daily *Al-Ahram* published a story about Al-Bashir's denial of a meeting with envoys of the UN General Secretary. Another Egyptian daily, *Al-Masry al-Youm*, published a report that humanitarian agencies expressed their concerns over the return of bloodshed in Darfur. It also published an article by a film critic about the position of American film director Steven Spielberg on the Darfur issue.

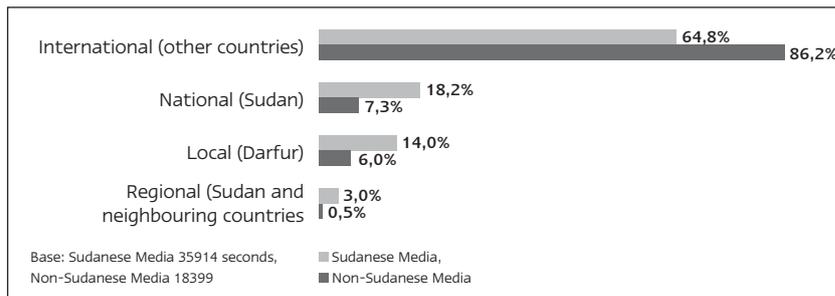
Unlike the state broadcast media, the Sudanese print, or opposition, media and specifically *Ray al-Shaab*, tended to look at Darfur as a local crisis resulting from government policies. For example, the paper criticized the role of the government troops in refugees and displaced camps in Darfur in a 24 November article. On 11 December it published a story saying there was evidence that the Sudanese government and its militias helped to create the crisis in Darfur. Unlike *Ray al-Shaab*, *Al-Intibaha*, another opposition newspaper, tended generally to avoid giving any implications for the crisis and when it did it tended to refer to wider regional or international implications.

Given the politicization of the Sudanese media outlets, especially the print media, the way in which the story was framed with regards to scope tends to reflect political divisions in Sudan. As a result, pro-government newspapers tend to take a broad and international scope on the crisis, while the opposition newspapers see it as a local crisis resulting from government policies. This is very clear in analyzing the style of coverage of the newspapers that are loyal to the governing National Congress Party (NCP) like *Al-Ray Al-Aam* and those which are perceived as opposition papers, like *Ray al-Shaab*, the mouthpiece of the Popular Congress Party (PCP), an opposition party led by Hassan Turabi.

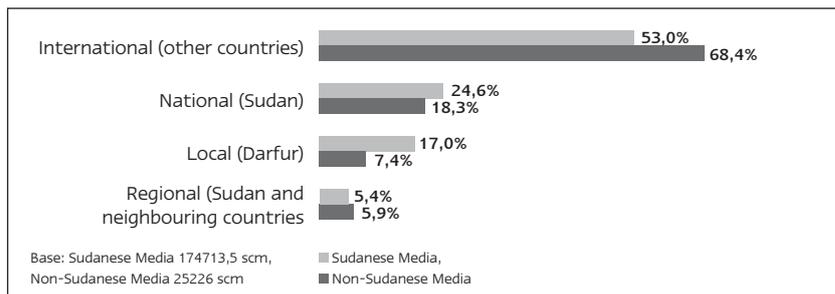
## 6.4 Scope

Another variable that was examined was the scope of the stories covered. Scope refers to the geographic breadth of the story, i.e. whether the story was covered as an international, regional, national or local story. These variables are significant as they shed light in how these stories were viewed both in Sudan and across the Arab world. Indeed, all media, electronic and print and Sudanese and non-Sudanese, tended to focus on the international implications or scope of the Darfur crisis as opposed to discussing it as a national or regional story (Tables 10 and 11).

**Table 10** *Electronic media: scope by Sudanese media and non-Sudanese media*



**Table 11** *Print media: scope of the story by the Sudanese media and non-Sudanese media*



The emphasis on the international dimensions of the coverage within non-Sudanese media is evidenced by their emphasis on the international and political dimensions and the work of the diplomatic community. This is not surprising given that the non-Sudanese media are targeting their audience; however, it is surprising when considering that Sudanese media, to a large extent, also have the tendency to see the Darfur conflict through an international lens.

When considering traditional (Western) news values, it would be expected that the Sudanese media would give less coverage of the international dimensions and more coverage of Darfur as a national or local story, due to proximity and relevance. However, this is not the case. The Sudanese media gave more weight to regional and local news than the non-Sudanese media, but still the international scope is of highest priority. This suggests that the Sudanese media view the conflict as one that is international in scope or that has international implications. This is quite remarkable in that the conflict is, for the most part, contained within the boundaries of Sudan. However, it is not surprising that non-Sudanese media place more emphasis on the international scope of the conflict as it is that angle that what would be most relevant to their audiences.

The Sudanese newspaper *Al-Ray Al-Aam* tends to focus on the international dimensions and looked at the crisis as part of a wider American plan to invade Sudan because of its wealth and resources. *Ray al-Shaab* focused more on the domestic dimensions and used the conflict of Darfur to criticize the policies of the Al-Bashir government.

With regards to the non-Sudanese media, both London-based papers, *Al-Hayat* and *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, tended to refer to regional or international ramifications and reference that the crisis is domestic was very rare with just two comments in *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* in 19 November and 20 December.

The same can be said of the printed press of Egypt, UAE and Lebanon. Journalists at Egyptian newspapers, including the independent *Al-Masry al-Youm* and *Al-Aosboa*, focused on the wider, regional or international, rather than local consequences of the crisis.

## 6.5 Storytelling

The way in which the story of the Darfur crisis is told is also important to look at, particularly the use and choice of language, the format in which the story was told and the attitude of the journalist in telling the story.

### **Type of Report**

There tended to be a lack of debate in the electronic media and coverage was largely straight news reporting free from any evaluations or comments. Indeed, such debate is much more likely to appear in editorials, news analyses, features, and investigative reports which are virtually non-existent in the electronic media in both Sudan and other Arab countries.

One must question the absence in the electronic media of what is normally considered healthy debate and discourse about such topics as the crisis in Darfur; less than 1% of the total electronic media coverage was allocated to commentary although this number was significantly higher for the print media which devoted almost one-third of the space to comment (Table 13). This is likely due to the fact that newspapers often have several pages devoted to commentary and editorial opinion. Such a clear line is more difficult to define in broadcast, hence the tendency to do straight news or current affairs reporting.

**Table 12** *Electronic Media: Type of Report*

Type of Report	Time (seconds)	Time (% seconds)
News reporting	44773	83,7%
Interview	8613	16,1%
Comment	123	0,2%
Total	53509	100,0%

**Table 13** *Print Media: Type of Report*

Kind of Report	Space (cm2)	Space (% cm2)
News reporting	117170	59,3%
Comment	58552,5	29,6%
Interview	20270	10,3%
Debate	1329	0,7%
Editorial	179	0,1%
Total	197500,5	100,0%

Journalists for non-Sudanese electronic and print media rarely revealed their expectations of the conflict's outcome and avoided using language that could be deemed as either pessimistic or optimistic with regards to the crisis. The same can be said about the Sudanese media, particularly the electronic media. Indeed, the lack of subjective comments or commentary in most of the news coverage suggests objectivity although there were some instances of subjectivity or non-neutral reporting.

**Table 14** *Electronic Media: Journalist's Behaviour*

Journalist's behaviour	Time (seconds)	Time (% seconds)
Neutral reporting	45808	87,2%
Not available	6410	12,2%
Support to the Sudanese army	314	0,6%
Total	52532	100,0%

**Table 15** *Print media: journalists' behaviour*

<i>Journalist's Behaviour</i>	<i>Space (cm2)</i>	<i>Space (% cm2)</i>
Neutral reporting	125005	62,4%
Not available	68828,5	34,3%
Support to the National Redemption Front	4375	2,2%
Support to the Sudanese army	2270	1,1%
<i>Total</i>	<i>200478,5</i>	<i>100,0%</i>

Print media do not appear to hold a critical position with regard to the Darfur conflict: in fact, in many cases it is impossible to determine which of the parties concerned is favoured by the journalist and, in most cases, neutrality prevails as shown in Table 15.

The coverage of *Al-Hayat* and *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* generally tended to avoid using language that revealed any attitudes except in relatively few cases where the journalists in both newspapers tended to be pessimistic. While they called for peaceful solutions to the conflict, they saw the chances of reaching such solutions as dim.

The printed press of Egypt, UAE and Lebanon was somewhat different: while the journalists tended not to reveal their attitudes, when they did they tended to be pessimistic. The journalists of *Al-Masry al-Youm*, for example, were generally neutral in their evaluations of the conflict. However, the newspaper published many comments on the crisis and in general most of the comments focused on American policy on the Darfur issue. The coverage of the Egyptian weekly, *Al-Aosboa*, however, tended to take the form of commentary, the journalists of the monitored issues did not give any evaluation, either pessimist or optimistic.

The monitoring results of the Sudanese press show a similar pattern both in terms of evaluating the conflict as well as the language the journalists use to describe it.

The journalists of *Al-Intibaha*, *Al-Ayam*, *Al-Sahafa* and *Al-Sudani*, for example, generally did not use language that revealed their expectations about the possibility of resolving the conflict. With the exception of *Al-Sudani*, where the journalists were equally divided between pessimism and optimism in their expectations, the journalists of the other three newspapers were, with very few exceptions, pessimistic about such a possibility.

While *Al-Ray Al-Aam* and *Ray al-Shaab* gave more space to the crisis in comparison to other Sudanese newspapers, a majority of the journalists tended to use neutral language in their assessments of the possibility of a peaceful settlement, although they were nearly equally divided in their optimism and pessimism, with more tendency to optimism.

#### **Language used**

The language used can suggest how journalists view the story. For example, words like "genocide" and "war crimes" that are highly charged could have politi-

cal intentions or meanings but could also simply indicate a certain level of journalistic illiteracy. It is, however, interesting to note that these terms were used more in Sudanese opposition print media. Overall, Sudanese outlets tended to use more biased terminology compared to their non-Sudanese colleagues.

In the electronic media that were examined, both in- and outside Sudan, specific terms were rarely used to define the conflict. On 27 November, the host of *Um Durman Radio* [state-run] used the word "severe damages" to describe the impact of the conflict in a comment he was reading on the activities of the compensations commission in Darfur. Other descriptions such as "human rights violations" were also used by the same radio on 25 November in a report about the activity of compensations commissions in Darfur. Again on 9 December, the host of a news bulletin on *Um Durman*, used strong words like the "crime of the century" and "crime against humanity" in a news report about the affair of the Darfuri children abducted from refugee camps in Chad. However, expressions like "genocide", "war crimes" and "crimes against humanity" were not used by the two Sudanese electronic media during the covered period.

The Sudanese press showed a different pattern in terms of the language that journalists used to describe the conflict. *Al-Intibaha* was the newspaper which most frequently used loaded expressions although *Ray al-Shaab* also reflected this tendency. On 5 December 2007, one of *Al-Intibaha's* journalists used the word "war crime" in a news report about the UN's call to Khartoum to help in arresting the State Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Ahmed Haroun, one of the two Sudanese wanted by the ICC at the time. The words "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide" were cited in the newspaper on 8 December in a comment about a speech attributed to Roger P. Winter, Special Representative of the Deputy Secretary of State for Sudan, before the sub-committee on Africa in the U.S. Congress on 8 October.

The journalists of *Al-Sudani*, used the terms "war crime" and "human crisis" twice to describe the conflict in Darfur. A journalist used the word "war crime" in a comment he published on 17 December 2007 about the impact of divisions and splits within rebel movements on the peaceful settlement of the conflict. The words "human crisis" was used in an editorial of the newspaper on 19 December about the United Nation policies toward the conflict and the military actions.

The term "war crimes" was used once on 9 December in a news report of the Sudanese *Al-Ray Alaam* in a story about the problems the hybrid force was facing. The word "genocide" was also used once in *Al-Ray-Al-Aam* in commentary published on 15 December. Meanwhile, *Ray al-Shaab*, the Sudanese newspaper of the Islamist Popular Congress Party led by Hassan Al Turabi who is very critical of the Khartoum regime and has close ties with the Darfuri rebel movement JEM, tended to use such loaded terminology more than other Sudanese and non-Sudanese newspapers. This is the case on 23 November, where the expression "human crisis" was used in a commentary about the causes of the crisis in Darfur and in a comment about the conditions of the refugees.

The term "genocide" was used by *Ray al-Shaab* in a comment on 28 November regarding the credibility of the Sudanese government's signature on the Rome Statute of the ICC. The term was used once more in a news report on 29 November and again in an editorial on 3 December about the delay in the deployment of the hybrid forces. The word was used in the same issue in a comment about the report of the International Crisis Group on Darfur and again in a comment about the kidnapping of Darfuri children from refugee camps.

A journalist from *Al-Ayam* used the term "ethnic cleansing" in a feature about the lack of independent and impartial media in Darfur on 24 November. In this feature, Sudanese journalists said that in the absence of independent and impartial media in covering the conflict in Darfur it would be hard to verify the truth about alleged war crimes and other atrocities related to the conflict in Darfur.

The term was also used on 11 December in a comment critical of the government in Darfur and on 17 December in a comment about abuse of women in Darfur. The term "war crimes" was also used in a comment on 25 November about the role of Sudan's Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Ahmad Haroun, in Darfur. The term "war crimes" was again in a news report on 6 December about a British call for the international community to intervene and again on 15 December.

The word "war crimes" was used in a news report about legal action by the Sudanese government against France regarding the kidnapped children. An *Al-Sahafa* journalist defined the conflict on 21 November as a "humanitarian crisis". In the same issue, the word "ethnic cleansing" was used in a story about the U.S. accusing senior Sudanese officials of committing war crimes in Darfur. The word "war crimes" was used in a news report about the kidnapped children. The word "genocide" was also used in a comment about the impact of settlement of the conflict in Darfur on peace in the whole Sudan. Some Sudanese newspapers used expressions like "human traffic" that did not appear in non-Sudanese newspapers. The term was used in a *Ray al-Shaab* commentary about Western claims over human rights violations on 1 December. "Crimes against humanity" was used in the same paper on 11 December in an article that was critical of the government's policies and actions in Darfur. "Human catastrophe" and "human suffering" were used in different comments about the conditions of the refugees. "Human catastrophe" was used in a commentary in *Al-Intibaha* on 10 December about the responsibility of the NCP, the country's ruling party. It was used again in a *Ray al-Shaab* commentary on the conditions of refugees in Darfur on 16 December. "Human tragedy" was another expression that a journalist used in his commentary, also in *Ray al-Shaab*, about the possibility of peaceful settlement on 16 December. In one case more than one expression was used. On 13 December, the words "human catastrophe" and "genocide" were used in a commentary about the difficulties the refugees face.

The word "genocide" was used by *Al-Ayam* on 10 December in comment about the kidnapping of Darfur children from refugees camps. It was used again on 11 December in another comment in which the writer was asking Muslims to pay attention to what is happening in Darfur.

Only in a few occasions did the non-Sudanese media use loaded expressions as found in the Sudanese print media. During an interview in *Al-Arabiya* TV with the Public Prosecutor of the ICC on 1 December, the term "genocide" was used while the term "war crimes" was used on 14 December in an interview with Al-Sadeg Al-Mahdi, chairman of the Sudanese *Umma* party and a former prime minister, on the program "*Bissaraha*" (Frankly).

*Al-Hayat* and *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* avoided defining the conflict while the printed press of Egypt, UAE and Lebanon had some instances of defining the conflict. This could be due to several reasons including their different audiences, that they are based in the UK and are more likely to have journalists who have been exposed to a less politicized Western model of journalism.

Terms like “war criminals” and “massacres” were used twice in *Al-Ahram*. On 2 December, a journalist used the term “war criminal” in a news report on claims by Darfur rebels that they shot down two Sudanese helicopters. Another journalist in a comment on 16 December wrote about the role of the European Union in Africa and used the term “massacres”.

The journalists of *Al-Nahar* used the term “genocide” twice on 22 November in a report about the Darfur crisis and the politicization of the language and again on 27 November in a news report about the rebels’ threats to Chinese peacekeepers. The term “war crimes” was used once on 6 December in a news report about Arab mediation between Khartoum, the Darfur rebels and the International Criminal Court.

## 6.6 Sources

**Table 16** *Electronic media: News sources*

<i>Electronic Media (seconds) (Base 42500 seconds)</i>	<i>Non-Sudanese</i>	<i>Sudanese</i>	<i>Total</i>
Sudanese government	4.0%	23.6%	27.6%
Reportage of the journalist	11.7%	12.7%	24.4%
Press agencies and other media	13.2%	8.9%	22.1%
National Civil Society Organizations and NGOs	0.0%	10.2%	10.2%
International Organizations	2.9%	6.6%	9.5%
Belligerents	0.1%	4.2%	4.3%
Other governments including the international community as a whole	0.3%	1.6%	1.9%
	32.1%	67.9%	100%

**Table 17** *Print Media: News sources*

<i>Print Media(cm2)</i> <i>(Base 139780 cm2)</i>	<i>Non-Sudanese</i>	<i>Sudanese</i>	<i>Total</i>
Sudanese govern- ment	7.4%	55.5%	62.9%
Reportage of the journalist	6.5%	17.0%	23.5%
Press agencies and other media	1.5%	2.3%	3.8%
International Organi- zations	0.5%	3.5%	4.0%
Belligerents	0.0%	3.1%	3.1%
Other governments including the inter- national community as a whole	0.0%	2.4%	2.4%
National Civil Society Organizations and NGOs	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
	15.9%	84.1%	100%

The prevalence of the Sudanese government as a source in news items may be due to the fact that in the monitored period the Darfur crisis was mainly covered by Sudanese media. In addition, it is likely that access to Sudanese officials was easier to get than access to other sources. It is also interesting to note the absence of rebel groups as sources by the Sudanese electronic media which could suggest that they were deliberately ignored or access to them was difficult. Similarly, local populations and victims are completely absent as both sources and protagonists. Again, this could be due either to lack of access to Darfur and its population, the readily available access to Sudanese officials and/or the habit of focusing on "officialdom" in Arab news as opposed to the Western style of using "real people" as a point of departure.

In addition, the most often cited source for the Sudanese electronic media (but not for the print media) was the Sudanese government (Tables 16 and 17). It is quite likely this is due to the fact that the electronic media are state-controlled and would thus essentially be the mouthpiece for the government. The print media, on the other hand, include opposition papers which would likely seek out other sources of information.

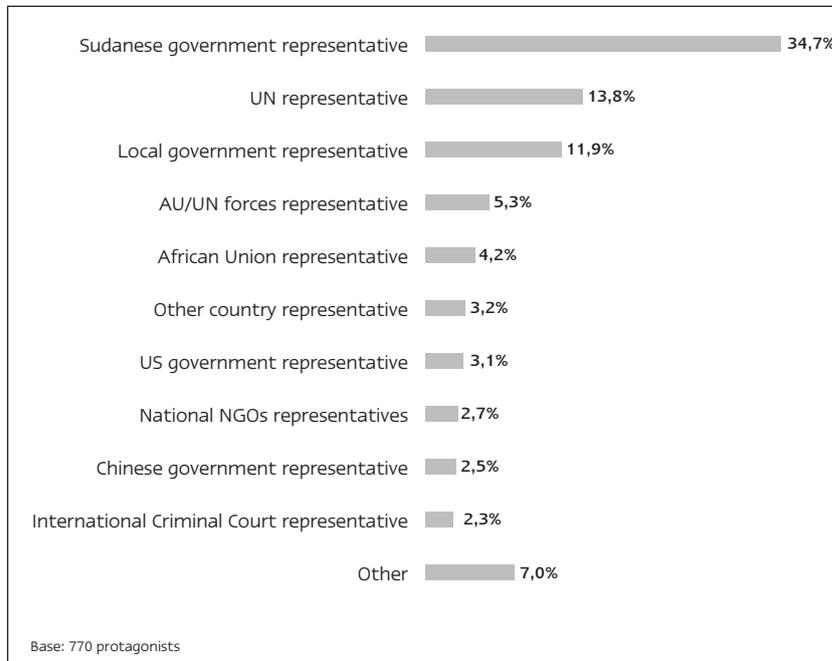
In almost one-third of the total space, no sources of information were provided and when they were (Table 17) they were most likely to be based on the journalist's reportage or, like the broadcast media (Table 16), on the Sudanese government. In addition, the sources used by the print media were not as varied as those used by the broadcast journalists.

Finally, the lack of visuals in many of the stories could be related to access. However, it is important to note that often international NGOs will have visuals that they will make available to the news media. In the Arab world, however, there is a certain level of distrust of such organizations and it could

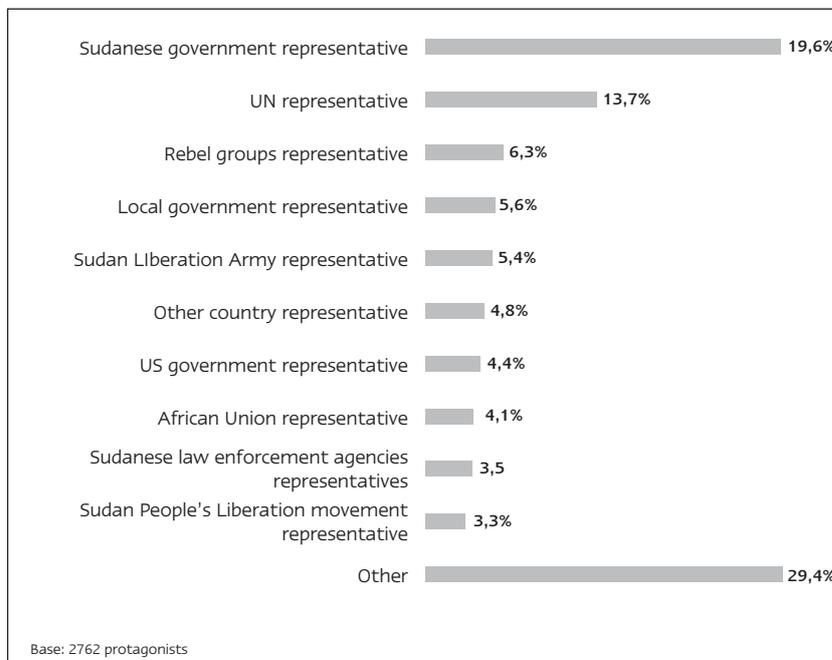
be due to this that there was a lack of visuals. It could, however, also be simply due to habit.

## 6.7 Protagonists

**Table 18** *Electronic media: Top ten protagonists*



**Table 19** *Print media: Top ten protagonists*

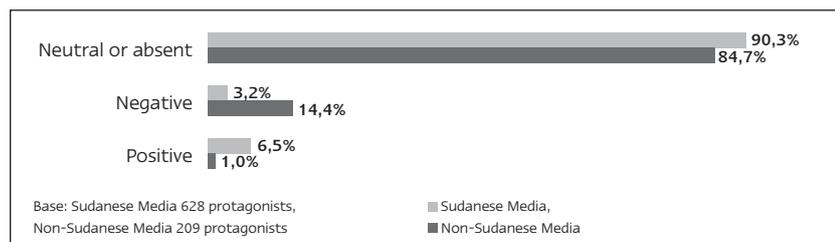


The Sudanese government is not only the main protagonist or character present or covered in a story, but it is also considerably more prevalent than

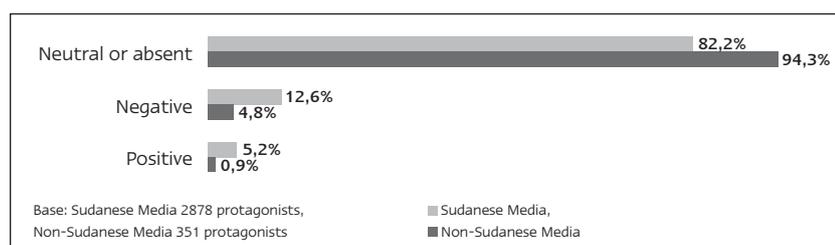
the others (Tables 18 and 19). The second most common protagonist is UN representatives. It is interesting to note that the Sudanese government is almost three times as often the main protagonist yet the scope and topics of coverage regarding the Darfur crisis, as mentioned earlier, are most often international.

Also striking is the complete lack of the local population as protagonists. This could suggest either that there was no access to such people or that the Arab media have a tendency to focus on officials as the protagonists.

**Table 20** *Electronic media: evaluations of the protagonists in story by Sudanese media and non-Sudanese media*



**Table 21** *Print media: evaluation of the protagonists in story by the Sudanese media and non-Sudanese media*



Finally, regarding journalists' evaluations of protagonists or events reported, the comparison between the Sudanese and non-Sudanese print media (Table 21) and Sudanese and non-Sudanese electronic media (Table 20) proves interesting.

Overall, the most neutral media are the non-Sudanese print media with the non-Sudanese electronic media being the most negative. On the Sudanese side, the state-run electronic media portrayed the protagonists in the most positive light while their print colleagues were more on the negative side.

This is not surprising, again, given the fact that the Sudanese electronic media are state-controlled and thus would be more likely to be favourable to their government. Finally, both in Sudanese media and in the other Arab media, neutrality of the journalist when evaluating the protagonists prevails. When there is any judgement expressed, the Sudanese media are on the positive side (6.5%) whilst the non-Sudanese media is predominantly negative (14.4%).

## 7 Findings from interviews with media representatives

The Arab media tend to acknowledge their weakness in covering the Darfur conflict, however they also tend to blame the paucity of coverage on lack of resources and the constraints imposed by the Sudanese government and rebels of the region. In order to ascertain what constraints and factors came into play as Sudanese and non-Sudanese media in the Arab world covered Darfur, a series of phone interviews were conducted with eleven journalists and editors at the media outlets monitored. The interviews were conducted in January – March 2008 with each interview lasting 15 to 30 minutes. All the questions aimed to find an answer to one major question: what are the factors determining the interviewee's organization coverage of Darfur crisis?

### 7.1 Financial and security obstacles to media coverage in Darfur

There is no doubt that financial factors influence the coverage of the Darfur crisis in one way or another. In some cases, limited sources of funding will force media organizations to depend economically on governments who then impose their political agendas on the media coverage. Likewise, the pan-Arab channels are funded by governments which affect their coverage as well.

Obstacles to the coverage of the crisis in Darfur are a common complaint among Arab media. Nevertheless, the difficulty of coverage varies according to the size and nature of the obstacles each media outlet faces and whether the obstacles are linked to security capability to move in such a dangerous region or to logistical resources and the possibility of sending correspondents.

In this context, Annour Ahmed Annour, editor-in-chief of the Sudanese newspaper *Al-Sahafa* says that there is "an extreme difficulty to reach and leave cities in the three states of Darfur in the presence of armed activities."

He stresses that journalists cannot "easily reach these places, [and can do so] only through international organizations and the United Nations." Annour also indicates that the "Sudanese newspapers face economic hardship which limits sending delegates to distant places and covering the events."

Abdel Azim Awad, the programme director at *Um Durman Radio* in Sudan says that the obstacles are linked to security: The "obstacle facing us in coverage comes from the security authorities and the rebels preventing us from entering the camps of displaced persons to cover the humanitarian situation there. We face this obstacle with the rebels specifically because *Um Durman Radio* is a governmental radio." According to Awad, *Um Durman* has eight correspondents in Darfur and they are always accompanied by security forces.

Haitham Abdel Rahim, the managing editor of the Sudanese newspaper *Ray al-Shaab* refers to the economic problems experienced by his newspaper which is considered pro-opposition. Despite these economic obstacles, he asserts that his paper still has "six correspondents in the Darfur region's three states."

A lack of resources is one of the obstacles faced by the Sudanese newspaper *Al-Ayam* as well. Its managing editor, Wael Mahjoub Mohammad Saleh said that it was forced to replace its correspondent in the south to fill the shortage in its staff in Darfur.

For non-Sudanese newspapers, the financial costs of reporting from Darfur are high. Even for large newspapers such as the Egyptian daily *Al-Ahram*, the high financial cost of maintaining correspondents in Darfur is a problem, according to Attiya Ayadi, the newspaper's Darfur correspondent. Attiya said that the cost of coverage can reach up to \$300 per correspondent per day. "Access to some hazardous camps such as Kalma camp means you have to be heavily guarded costing about \$600 per day," he said. Attiya also points out that "the Sudanese government is putting obstacles in front of the journalists to prevent them from reaching the refugee camps and thus withhold the reality of the deteriorating humanitarian situation there". He stresses that "all these things make the newspapers reluctant to send journalists to Darfur."

Mustafa Bakri, editor-in-chief of the Egyptian weekly *Al-Aosboa* recognizes that the potential financial issues constitute an obstacle to his newspaper's coverage of the crisis in Darfur.

Financial and human resources may not pose a problem for the satellite channels but their correspondents are still subject to restricted movement in Darfur just like the other media outlets whether due to rebel or government obstacles.

Nabil Al-Khatib, news director of *Al-Arabiya* satellite TV channel, says "there are considerable obstacles facing us, most notably those related to procedural and legal arrangements." He adds that the coverage requires "permission from the security authorities." Al Khatib said that these obstacles prevented the channel from establishing an office in Darfur.

Abdel-Rahman Al-Bteih, the news editor of the satellite TV channel *Abu Dhabi*, talks about the security barriers also facing the channel's coverage of the crisis in Darfur. He says that "political decisions in Sudan hinder the idea of sending correspondents to Darfur. The satellite channel of *Abu Dhabi* cannot send reporters without prior permission from the Sudanese government and even reporters agreed upon are required to obtain numerous security approvals." He adds "if the reporter is selected he should be accompanied by someone to identify the places where cameras are permitted."

Ahmed Al-Sheikh, news editor of *Al-Jazeera* satellite TV channel, confirms that the channel "does not face the problem of limited resources," but he indicates that the authorities "sometimes impede the arrival of reporters to the refugee camps in Darfur not to mention the security concerns that prevent our access to the camps". He adds "we have a permanent correspondent in Darfur who is exposed to the same obstacles that we face in coverage but his access to information relies on his skills and his relations with the Sudanese officials."

## **7.2 Restrictions and censorship imposed by authorities**

In addition to logistical and security constraints, there are complaints about censorship and other legal or official restrictions.

Haitham Abdel Rahim, managing editor of *Ray al-Shaab* newspaper, says "there is indirect censorship on our newspaper in addition to the direct cen-

ensorship imposed on most of the newspapers published in Khartoum when a situation breaks out." He adds, "there is a tribal control exerted on the newspaper at this time as well as the government control which prevents the ads, invitations and governmental activities." He says that direct censorship after publication comes via lawsuits imposed on them. "Most of the cases brought against us are from the National Security Agency." Abdel Rahim also talked about "the absence of the law and an order banning publication issued by the competent prosecutor in the print press."

For his part, Wael Mahjoub, managing editor of *Al-Ayam* newspaper said that "there is currently no censorship but censorship may be imposed in case of new developments related to foreign affairs and other matters that occur." He also pointed out that "there are a number of laws restricting the journalists' work, and many of them were sued for publication," adding that his newspaper almost had to halt publication in 2003 as "many experienced arrest and detention" because of coverage of the crisis in Darfur.

Mustafa Bakri, the chief editor of *Al-Aosboa*, says that the problem is with American and Western media who he says are biased against the Sudanese government and accuse government officials of being involved in war crimes.

Nabil Al-Khatib of *Al-Arabiya* TV channel revealed the limitations imposed by the authorities and its negative impact on media coverage. He cited an example, saying that a TV documentary "has been produced under the name Jihad Alal Jiyad (Jihad on Horseback) but *Al-Arabiya* could not broadcast it because of extraordinary governmental pressure to obstruct and ban the broadcast on *Al-Arabiya*." He added in another example that "some correspondents went from Khartoum to Darfur on their own but were still subject to intensive security interrogation by the authorities in Khartoum."

Attiya Ayadi of *Al-Ahram* Egyptian newspaper confirms that the restrictions on coverage are very limiting but pointed out that "journalists and editors practice self-censorship; sometimes the editor-in-chief removes sensitive topics that might create a problem between the Egyptian and the Sudanese government." He also said that the "rebel leaders secretly fear any Arab journalist, specifically an Egyptian, believing that Egypt supports the Sudanese government at the expense of the rebels."

For his part, Al-Bteih of *Abu Dhabi TV*, accused the authorities of "not cooperating with the Arab media to uncover the truth but giving way to international and foreign organizations that send information and news from Darfur."

### 7.3 Alternative sources of information

The aforementioned obstacles, especially those of resources, lack of correspondents, and restrictions imposed by the government, have made numerous media seek alternative sources of information on the developments in Darfur. One of the most prominent of these sources is news agencies and international television outlets; however, it is clear there is still a need for more alternative sources of information.

Haitham Abdel Rahim of the Sudanese newspaper *Ray al-Shaab* says that "the information is made available to us by parties other than the Sudanese government. We get the information from our correspondents in all regions and through direct contact with the source of information in addition to international organizations related to the crisis in Darfur".

Nabil Al-Khatib of *Al-Arabiya TV* pointed to the scarcity of the alternative resources and said that "the information is often gotten from the international humanitarian organizations, but usually they lack pictures."

Ahmed Al-Sheikh of *Al-Jazeera TV* says that "the sources of information for reporters depend on their skills and the variety of their relationships. Concerning the second source of information, it comes from the international news agencies in addition to our sources which come through Sudanese officials and rebels." However, Sheikh blames the international news agencies for their "bias against the Sudanese government". He says "we are professional and we will not be biased to the Sudanese government to achieve the balance that was lost because of the Western media."

For his part, Abdel Rahman Al-Bteih of *Abu Dhabi TV* says that the news does not represent the viewpoint of the *Abu Dhabi* station. The station's main source of information comes from their correspondents accompanying international security forces who he says "are the source of information for all international news agencies."

## 7.4 Editorial policy

Another question asked during the interviews was whether there are editorial policies adopted by the local and Arab media when covering the crisis in Darfur. None of the media interviewed have written editorial policies, style-books or guidelines dealing with conflict in general or the Darfur crisis specifically. Indeed, it seems that there are general features of such a policy, but the parameters are unclear.

Haitham Abdel-Rahim from the Sudanese newspaper *Ray al-Shaab* says that "the coverage of Darfur falls under the editorial policy of the newspaper. At the same time, the crisis in Darfur has a particularity in the coverage and is given larger space because the newspaper *Ray al-Shaab* is considered an opposition newspaper." He added that "one of the fixed facts of *Ray al-Shaab* is to focus on the humanitarian aspect of Darfur and to push national efforts towards an integrated solution of the situation" from this perspective.

Annour Ahmed Annour from the Sudanese newspaper *Al-Sahafa* says that their editorial policy is based on "objectivity and impartiality and on including all the information coming to us to serve the national interest not exceeding the legal limits and parameters." He points out that "the Sudanese newspapers have a code of ethics to adhere to and that each newspaper has its customs and traditions."

Abdel Azim Awad of *Um Durman Radio* says that "our policy is based on editorial objectivity taking into account all views." As for Darfur, however, "it does not fall under the general editorial policy because it has financial, professional and editorial particularities."

Wael Mahjoub of the Sudanese newspaper *Al-Ayam* said that accuracy and objectivity are the basis of the editorial policy of his newspaper.

As for the non-Sudanese media, the predominantly pan-Arab outlook is obvious and clear to some, as is the case with Mustafa Bakri of the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Aosboa*. He says that his newspaper's editorial policy is based on the premise that the "issue of Sudan is an Arab strategic security issue." The Arab satellite channels prefer to be objective in dealing with the crisis in Darfur. Nabil Al-Khatib of *Al-Arabiya* says their editorial policy in this regard

is based on "reporting events as they are on the ground" and on "emphasizing the human suffering without dumping in the political developments". In this context, Al-Khatib blames other Arab media for framing Darfur as "a conspiracy by the West" to cast Sudan and the Sudanese government in a negative light. Therefore, Al-Khatib suggests, the Arab stations should always talk about the Darfur issue "from the concept of solidarity with the Sudanese government".

Similarly, Ahmed Al-Sheikh of *Al-Jazeera* TV says that their coverage of this issue focuses "firstly according to the professional reasons which include the humanitarian situation. We are interested in the suffering of human beings wherever they are."

Radwan Aqil, the Darfure correspondent for the Lebanese newspaper *Al-Nahar*, says, "all journalists sympathize with this issue. I followed the rules of the press concerning the investigation and the verification of the information as well as presenting all views and opinions objectively away from favoritism and without the newspaper's interference."

Attiya Ayadi from *Al-Ahram* newspaper confirms that his newspaper deals with this issue "like the rest of the issues," adding that the priority of *Al-Ahram* "is to publish the news with balance giving it the real dimension away from excitement which provokes the Sudanese government."

For his part, Marwan Matni of LBC TV confirms that the editorial policy of his channel on the Darfur issue is to deal with it from "a humanitarian point of view". Similarly, Abdel Rahman Batih of *Abu Dhabi TV* says "that the file of Darfur falls under the general editorial policy of the station and is treated like other files only in the case of confirming the existence of human rights violations".

In addition, it would seem that even financial constraints were a factor in editorial policies concerning Darfur. However, overwhelming there is clearly editorial emphasis on the humanitarian side of the story. This is interesting given that in the monitoring such stories came in only second after political stories.

## 7.5 Training

Most journalists who work with these media organizations received training on media coverage in general while only a few of them are trained on the coverage of the situation in Darfur in particular. As such, it is clear from the interviews that there is a need for training in conflict sensitive journalism as well as training with regards to the Darfur crisis. However, this may not be the case for all media as satellite channels such as *Al-Jazeera* and *Al-Arabiya* have in-house training for their editorial staff.

The journalists of the Sudanese newspaper *Al-Sahafa*, according to Annour Ahmed Annour, participated "in some workshops and training courses held by some international organizations to cover the conflict". According to Wael Mahjoub, journalists from *Al-Ayam* newspaper underwent different workshops held by their newspaper.

The situation at *Um Durman Radio* is slightly different. Abdel Azim Awad confirms that the staff received training "in Malaysia on the coverage of current events in addition to several other courses conducted by some international media organizations". In addition, the radio station is pushing its correspondents in Darfur to take a special course on "War Correspondence".

The situation does not appear encouraging for the newspaper *Ray al-Shaab*, however, as Haitham Abdel Rahim said that none of the correspondents or editors received any training or courses on the coverage of Darfur's conditions or on war and conflict in general.

The situation is similar for the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* as Atiya Ayad says that their journalists have not received any training and their qualifications do not exceed the "personal interest" in the issue.

For the newspaper *Al-Nahar*, Radwan Aqil says that his journalists have participated in training sessions for Lebanese journalists conducted by an international centre run by the newspaper. Radwan also participated in the training and taking advantage of his personal experience of reporting on Darfur.

The satellite channels seem better prepared thanks to the specialized training received by the journalists in this context. For example, Nabil Al-Khatib, at *Al-Arabiya TV*, says that they have programs for such training, but he stated that these programs "are not developed enough". The channel addresses this shortcoming by "attracting leadership and qualified people able to produce reports focusing on the human dimension" of Darfur.

The journalists of *Al-Jazeera*, according to Ahmed Al-Sheikh, take special courses through a training institution they work with on "humanitarian coverage of the conflicts and wars".

Meanwhile, *Abu Dhabi TV*, Abdel Rahman Bteih confirms that "they have the knowledge of all the international files, including the Darfur file without receiving training in this regard".

Marwan Matni says that as a result of the crisis in Lebanon, journalists at LBC channel are more prepared to follow up on various types of conflicts. In addition, the channel gives them editorial and technical training that seeks to make any one of them capable of going to places of conflict and completing the coverage alone.

## 7.6 Volume of coverage

The Sudanese and Arab media differ in terms of the volume of coverage concerning the issue of Darfur. While the situation occupies a larger space in the local Sudanese media for obvious reasons, in the Arab media the situation is represented in almost equal proportions to other issues of social concern. This allocation of coverage is also reflected in the number of journalists dedicated to Darfur in comparison with other issues.

The editor of *Al-Aosboa*, Mustafa Bakri, says that he has a team of three persons specialized in Sudanese affairs who are in charge of the *Al-Aosboa's* special edition which is printed in Sudan and related to its affairs.

At *Al-Arabiya TV*, the Darfur issue falls within the framework of African affairs in general. However, according to Nabil Al-Khatib, Darfur is regarded as an essential feature of the channel's African coverage because it is considered an Arab issue "making it a priority in coverage".

For *Al-Jazeera*, there is no fixed percentage of coverage on Darfur "but it depends on the importance of the event and the focus now is on the issue of Rafah border and check point," according to Ahmed Al-Sheikh.

The lack of resources plays a role in determining the volume of coverage of the Darfur issue for the newspaper *Al-Nahar* which generally covers less of the Darfur issue than it likely deserves considering the magnitude of the crisis in relation to other issues.

Attiya Ayadi of *Al-Ahram* acknowledges that the volume of coverage of the issue of Darfur in his newspaper is "not sufficient" and is perhaps due to lack of resources.

Marwan Metni of LBC channel says that this issue occupies a volume equal to the coverage of other issues in the region. He also indicates that the channel does not have a department for African Affairs but rather a specialized department called "hot spots".

All in all it would appear that for the most part, the Darfur conflict does not garner any particular volume of coverage for several reasons including financial. Rather the conflict is covered as any other conflict in the region or on the African continent and will get the attention of editors when there is a spike or significant event.

## 7.7 Satisfaction of coverage

In general, the interviewed media representatives expressed dissatisfaction with the size and nature of coverage concerning the Darfur issue in the Arab media especially among those in charge of covering the issue.

Abdel Azim Awad of *Um Durman Radio* says the Arab media "fall short in its reporting on Darfur since they participate in the coverage upon invitations rather than self-initiatives," while "foreign media are subject to the interests of some non-governmental organizations."

For his part, Mustafa Bakri criticizes what he describes as "double standards" by some Arab media in dealing with the issue of Darfur which is considered both a humanitarian and political issue. He wonders "why those who weep over what's happening in Darfur not weep over what is happening in Gaza," for example. To Bakri this reveals a double standard and suggests that the purpose behind exaggerating the tragedy "is political".

Nabil Al-Khatib of *Al-Arabiya* expressed his dissatisfaction with the level of coverage by both the Arab and the foreign media. He says that "there is a word of truth that is utilized for ill purposes by the Western media while the Arab media has another unfortunate theory: that the killing of innocent people at the hands of Arabs is valid in some cases."

Also, Wael Mahjoub of the Sudanese newspaper *Al-Ayam*, thinks that there is a "lack of knowledge" in the Arab media in relation to the nature of the Darfur issue.

Ahmed Al-Sheikh of *Al-Jazeera* and Radwan Aqil of *Al-Nahar* accuse the "news agencies of being biased in their coverage against the Sudanese government."

Marwan Matni of LBC believes that both Western and Arab media "lack essential data for building objective news" on Darfur. He expresses his regret that "despite the volume of the humanitarian tragedy in Darfur the media was unable to shed the light with transparency and objectivity."

Haitham Abdel Rahim of *Ray al-Shaab* newspaper "accuses the Western media of being biased in its coverage and the Arab media of lacking "full knowledge" of the nature and background of the conflict making the output of both incomplete.

Albteih from *Abu Dhabi* channel goes so far as to say that "there isn't any Arab media coverage on the issue of Darfur. There is no Arab media in Darfur and this failure lies with both the Sudanese government in the first place and with the Arab media itself in the second place".

Clearly, despite the will and possibilities to cover the conflict, most journalists and editors have expressed disappointment in both the quantity and quality of the coverage of Darfur and lay blame largely on the lack of knowledge of the conflict. However, if this is to change then it will likely need, as expressed earlier, some specialized training not just of Darfur but conflict in general. Additionally, it will require the support and commitment of editors to carry such coverage rather than simply pay lip service.

## 8 Outlining the challenges for covering the Darfur conflict

The analysis of how the media covered the Darfur conflict combined with the reflections of journalists and editors on how their news outlets covered Darfur and the obstacles faced in that regard gives a analytical snapshot of how the media perceive the conflict and what challenges confront journalists and other media workers if they wish to increase coverage of the conflict or improve the quality of it.

The first major conclusion of the study is that media coverage of the Darfur crisis is limited. Significantly, the study provides evidence that the Arab media does not give any significant priority to the crisis; rather they cover the crisis as they would cover any other crisis in the African region and indicate that the coverage is not considered an "Arab cause" as the Israeli/Palestinian conflict or Iran/U.S. tensions. It would seem that the Darfur crisis only receives increased coverage when something particular catches the attention of the editors.

There are many reasons for the scarcity in coverage. Journalists and editors themselves points towards a series of concrete obstacles for covering Darfur including financial constraints for travelling to the region as well security problems and problems gaining access to the region. It is the Sudanese authorities who make access to Darfur difficult and do so as a means of controlling the information and news getting out of the region. The non-Sudanese media also meet restrictions in the form of pressure from the authorities in the countries in which they operate. Eventually, the scarcity of the coverage is also linked to the priority and editorial choice applied to the crisis in Darfur.

Meanwhile, the Sudanese media provide more substantial coverage of the Darfur crisis than their non-Sudanese peers. Still, Sudanese journalists are faced with many of the same restrictions as their non-Sudanese colleagues. Financial constraints, problems of gaining access to the region, and – to a far greater degree – censorship imposed by government authorities, as well as self-censorship imposed by the journalists or their editors.

The control imposed by the authorities on the coverage underlines the political nature of the Darfur crisis. This becomes clear when the media content itself is analyzed. The findings of the content analysis demonstrate that the crisis is first and foremost framed in a political dimension with the crisis framed as a political struggle between local Sudanese actors. This is most evident in the coverage in the Sudanese written press where different political positions are represented in the media and the Darfur coverage becomes a platform where these positions can be addressed. Pro-government newspapers tend to take a broad and international view of the crisis while the opposition papers see it as local crisis stemming from government policies.

The political dimension as the main frame also becomes clear in how the crisis is portrayed – that of a struggle between the Sudanese government and the international community. One example of this is the focus on diplomatic and political tensions between the Sudanese government and the international actors. This trend is underlined by the scope applied by the media in that they frequently focus on the international implications of the crisis as opposed to

viewing the crisis with a local Sudanese context. These tendencies are found in both Sudanese and non-Sudanese media and gives evidence to the well-known politicization of media coverage in Arab countries and in Sudan.

The crisis in Darfur is also framed as a humanitarian issue. According to the findings, it is the state-controlled electronic media in Sudan that makes most use of this framing. Nevertheless, even this particular framing of the crisis is linked to the political dimension as it gives the impression that the crisis is caused by external factors such as the international community instead of local causes. This is furthermore stressed by the analysis which identifies the topics covered. Stories focusing on the refugees, for example, are very few, especially in the non-Sudanese media and the Sudanese state-controlled electronic media.

The refugees and other victims of the conflict are losing out in the media coverage in large part because when humanitarian issues are covered they tend to lean become politicized. Looking into which sources are used in the media coverage this trend becomes even clearer. Only on rare occasions are the victims used as direct sources in the news stories. Instead, Sudanese government sources are prevalent in the news stories. Likewise, it is government officials that stand out as one of the main protagonists in the news coverage. No doubt the difficult access to the Darfur region can explain in part the tendencies not to use refugees and other victims as sources. Still, it can only explain this partly which gives further evidence to the use of the political dimension in the coverage with the overall tendency to rely on political actors (government officials, representatives from the international community) as sources.

The use of language in covering the Darfur crisis is relatively balanced and sensitive. Still, the media content analysis indicates that some media, and in particular the Sudanese written press, use terms which lean towards special interpretations of conflict. Terms such as 'genocide', 'ethnic cleansing'; and 'human catastrophe' clearly indicate a position to the crisis and do not necessarily give a balanced and objective presentation of the situation. It is likely for this reason that one of the recommendations of the interviewed journalists and editors calls for training and capacity building in conflict sensitive journalism and it would seem that this is indeed relevant and needed.

Considering the tendencies to politicize the media coverage of the Darfur crisis and the use of specific frames which give emphasis to the political dimension, it is of concern that few platforms offer a balanced debate between different positions to the crisis. Although there is no long tradition for debates in the Arab and Sudanese media, this stands out as a particular problem in relation to the complexity of the crisis in Darfur.

Clearly, several challenges become apparent: the difficulty in gathering information; restrictions, controls and self-censorship; lack of resources and weak professionalism which to a great extent has led to the politicization of Darfur coverage. It then becomes necessary to consider ways in which these challenges could be addressed. The roundtable recommendations (Chapter 9) provide a good starting point, as well as additional recommendations and suggestions for enhancing the media coverage. In synthesis these recommendations are:

- Provide conflict sensitive journalism training to journalists as well as to editors and other gatekeepers so all involved in the process are on the same page;

- Engage Sudanese authorities and parties involved in the conflict in dialogue regarding the media; in particular in relation to providing access to Darfur, ensuring the safety of journalists in Darfur; and resist from controlling and censoring media content
- Promote that the Sudanese and the Arab media adhere to objectivity, credibility, accuracy and balance in the coverage of Darfur conflict and upholding professional ethics.
- Encourage that the Sudanese and the Arab media give more attention to the conflict in Darfur and to human rights issues with interest and concern for the coverage in the field.
- Assist news outlets to ensure they have clear editorial policies regarding Darfur and conflict in general;
- Encourage journalists to seek out alternative sources of information; and,
- Encourage media organizations to pool resources and build cooperation for coverage of Darfur, thus enabling resources to stretch further.

Indeed, while these are all suggestions, it is largely up to the news organizations, authorities, media development organizations and possible donors to work together to discern ways in which best to address the challenges confronted in covering the Darfur crisis and in doing so allow for coverage of that crisis and other crises and conflicts that is fair, balanced and responsible.

## 9 The way forward

### Recommendations from the Roundtable

#### **Closing Statement on Roundtable on Media Coverage of the Darfur crisis, Amman, Jordan 28 August 2008**

A group of Arab and Sudanese journalists held a roundtable discussion in Amman August 27 and 28, 2008 to discuss media coverage of issues related to the crisis in Darfur. The roundtable developed a number of recommendations with a view to improving both the quality and quantity of news coverage regarding Darfur.

Presented at the meeting were the research findings of a content analysis of the coverage of Darfur by 21 Sudanese and Arab media outlets over a period of one month in late 2007. Researchers also conducted phone interviews with 13 journalists from these same media outlets. The goal of this research was to provide a snapshot of how Darfur is covered and create the basis for the media to develop recommendations of how this coverage, where relevant, could be improved.

Highlights of the research show that the Sudanese media devoted significantly more time and space to the crisis than their counterparts from other Arab countries.

The research shows that the main topic of the news coverage tended to focus on the work of the diplomatic community with 33.7% of total time devoted to Darfur coverage (electronic media) while conditions of refugees received only 4.7% of time. Results were similar for the print media.

The findings also reveal that the geographical focus of the stories varied. In most cases (64.8% in Sudanese electronic media and 86.2% of non-Sudanese media) the story was presented as an international story with a focus on such issues as the International Criminal Court and diplomatic negotiations. On the other hand, the national dimension of the crisis received less coverage. Again, findings were similar for the print media.

The main focus of the stories tended to be the political dimension for both Sudanese and non-Sudanese media. Stories focusing on human interest and human rights violations received less time and space particularly in non-Sudanese media.

In terms of sources used, in 22% of the cases the source was not identified. A similar percentage saw Sudanese government officials as sources while international NGOs were used as sources in less than one per cent of the cases.

After reviewing the results, the participants agreed that the Arab media coverage of the crisis in Darfur fell short with respect to the following aspects:

1. Inadequate attention to the conflict in Darfur by Arab media;
2. Little coverage from the field;
3. Focus on the political side and neglecting humanitarian and human interest stories;
4. The events in Darfur did not provide comprehensive coverage of the conflict in a way that reflects, to an Arab audience, all aspects of the dispute; and
5. The media coverage often lacked objectivity, accuracy and balance.

The participants identified a number of challenges involved in covering Darfur which resulted in the weak coverage of Darfur. These challenges include:

1. The difficulty of obtaining information, and access to the conflict zone because of restrictions imposed on journalists by the parties of the conflict;
2. Some of the media lack a clear editorial policy while others were biased towards one party or the other;
3. Restrictions and controls imposed by the parties of the conflict;
4. Self-censorship;
5. Lack of adequate financial resources for some Arab media while others did not allocate sufficient financial resources to cover the conflict often due to editorial policy; and
6. Weak professionalism and lack of training regarding the coverage of conflict, war, investigative reporting, human rights and human interest stories.

The roundtable developed a set of recommendations which was adopted by the participating media institutions:

1. Inviting the Sudanese government, the militant movements and all parties of the conflict to facilitate the access of journalists to Darfur and ensure their safety, and lifting all restrictions imposed on them. Inviting Arab governments to desist from interfering in the work of media organisations and lifting all restrictions on journalists, ensuring media freedom, and introducing democratic legislations to ensure freedom of the press and media.
2. Respecting journalists' rights in obtaining information so they can perform their duties professionally. Requesting the Arab media to adhere to objectivity, credibility, accuracy and balance in the coverage of Darfur conflict and upholding professional ethics.
3. Inviting the Arab media and the responsible parties to train journalists to cover conflict and promote a culture of peace and human rights.
4. Calling upon Arab media to give more attention to the conflict in Darfur and to human rights issues with interest and concern for the coverage in the field.
5. Inviting media organizations and Arab journalists to diversify their sources of information searching for alternatives through the community and humanitarian organizations operating in Darfur and any other available sources.

The roundtable expects that these recommendations will lead to substantive initiatives and that initiatives addressing these recommendations will be developed.

The roundtable is part of a project developed with a number of organizations working in media and human rights issues including: AmmanNet/Community Media Network, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Khartoum Center for Human Rights and Environmental Development, Osservatorio di Pavia and International Media Support.

The final report with research findings and roundtable recommendations will be released later this year.

The participating media in the roundtable were:

1. *Al-Sahafa* daily (Sudan)
2. *Um Durman* (Radio) (Sudan)
3. *Al-Ahram* daily (Egypt)
4. *Al-Masry Al-Yawm* daily (Egypt)
5. *Al-Arabiya* TV (Dubai)
6. *Abu Dhabi* Satellite TV (*Abu Dhabi*)
7. *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* daily (London)
8. *Al-Nahar* daily (Lebanon)
9. *Al-Sijill* newspaper (Jordan)

# 10 Annex I – Methodology

## **Methodology related to media content monitoring**

A comprehensive coding sheet was devised and then media analysts were trained in monitoring and use of the coding sheet. These sessions also constituted an occasion to test the coding sheet and to fine tune it according to the actual needs of the monitoring.

This study assessed the content of the journalistic coverage of Darfur crisis in a sample of news bulletins, TV programs and newspaper stories. It was based on a content analysis of the news related to Darfur in the daily papers and television and radio newscasts and other relevant programs.

Qualitative analysis concerned the aspects touched by the quantitative analysis in what we called Comment Area. Qualitative analysis will be conducted in Arabic language and it will be the duty of each Analysis Supervisor to produce a concise final report both in Arabic and English. Analysts will try to answer briefly to each of the following questions:

1. *The implications of the crisis*: is the crisis described as a mere internal problem or rather there are references to the broader impact (peace, humanitarian crisis, etc.) the conflict has at regional level? In other words, is the Darfur crisis described as an internal problem or as an issue impacting on a broader level?
2. *Kind of language (verbal and visual) used by journalists*: does the type of language used implicitly tend to reinforce the idea of ineluctability of the conflict or rather tends to support the opening of a dialogue among warring parties?
3. *Access*: is there any explicit mention to the difficulties found by journalists in accessing Darfur area? If yes please comment.
4. *Kind of definition of the conflict*: do journalists use terms as genocide, humanitarian crisis, ethnic cleansing to describe the conflict?
5. *Comments and evaluations*: when presents, what kind of evaluations and comments are used to describe the conflict (e.g. the indifference of the international community, the responsibilities of the Sudanese authorities, etc.)

When compiling this part analysts were asked to specify the elements on which their observations are formulated.

## **Methodology related to interviews**

Interviews were conducted with eleven media outlets' representatives through phone calls. The prohibitive cost of conducting interviews in person is why they were done by phone. The interviews were conducted during January – March 2008 with each interview lasting 15 to 30 minutes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed and then edited according to the topics. The interviews were based on open-ended questions which varied from one interviewee to another according to the nature of their media outlets (Arab or Sudanese, local or regional). All the questions aimed to find an answer to one major question: what are the factors determining the interviewee's organization coverage of Darfur crisis?

The questions aimed to define the factors determining the Arab media coverage of Darfur crisis. The questions covered the following main topics:

- The audience and nature of the media outlet.
- The economic condition of the media organization.
- The editorial policies of the outlet.
- The surrounding environment of the organization (politics, laws, culture, etc).
- Sources of information.
- The qualifications of journalists and editors, and training workshops.

### **The interviewees**

*Sudanese media outlets:*

- Annour Ahmed Annour, editor-in-chief of the Sudanese newspaper "*As-sahafa*".
- Abdel Azim Awad, the program director in the official "*Um Durman Radio*".
- Haitham Abdel Rahim, the managing editor of the Sudanese newspaper "*Rai Al-Shaab*".
- Wael Mahjoub, managing editor of "*Al Ayyam*" newspaper.

*Arab media outlets:*

- Attiya Ayadi, Darfur editor for the Egyptian newspaper "*Al-Ahram*".
- Nabil Al-Khatib, news director of *Al-Arabiya* satellite TV channel.
- Abdel Rahman Al-Bteih, correspondent for *Abu Dhabi* satellite TV channel.
- Ahmed Al-Sheikh, news editor of "*Aljazeera*" satellite TV channel.
- Mustafa Bakri, editor-in-chief of the Egyptian newspaper "*Al-Usbu'a*".
- Marwan Matni, program manager of LBC satellite TV channel.
- Radwan Aqil, Darfur correspondent for the Lebanese newspaper "*Annahar*".

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- The editorial policies of the outlet.
- The surrounding environment of the organization (politics, laws, culture, etc)
- Sources of information.
- The qualifications of journalists and editors, and training workshops.

### **Methodology related to the roundtable**

The media representatives who were selected for the qualitative interviews were also invited to participate in the roundtable or to send other representatives of the same media outlets to replace them.

The participants represented the Arab media outlets which have considerable coverage of the Darfur crisis and that have a widespread audience. Those outlets can be divided into three main categories. First, Pan-Arab media outlets which cover Arab regional topics, such as the Pan-Arab satellite TV stations and the Pan-Arab-London-based newspapers. The second group was the Sudanese media outlets. Third, were the Egyptian media outlets, which are the closest to Sudan and the most involved in the Darfur crisis among the Arab countries. Finally, were some Lebanese Media outlets which are interested in Arab issues.







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