

“Al-Fashir Under Siege: A City Killed by Gunfire and Media Blackout”





After the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) seized control of the city of Al Fashir, the last stronghold of the Sudanese Armed Forces in the Darfur region, on 26 October 2025, the city became an isolated island. All digital communications linking civilians with the outside world were cut off, leaving residents in isolation amid a wave of crimes amounting to genocide and war crimes.

This information blackout was not a mere incidental by-product of conflict, but a deliberate strategy carried out by the RSF as it has in every area it enters.

On the ground, the RSF worked to disable communications lines and cut the only working Starlink networks in the city, leaving civilians with no means of reporting violations or calling for help while the world watched in silence.

This intensive cut-off created a state of fear and isolation, and afforded the militia freedom to carry out arrests, mass killings, attacks on journalists, and the bombing of hospitals and internally displaced camps without immediate accountability.

Digital space was also manipulated: news feeds filled with scattered items, some outdated or fabricated, blending fact and fiction to confuse audiences even as independent reports, such as satellite imagery analyses and survivor testimonies, documented a verified picture of violations.

Through this report we aim to offer a comprehensive narrative of what happened

in Al-Fashir, removed from misleading narratives and media disinformation.

Communications Cut Off

Resistance committees in the city confirmed that the internet blackout was not random, but an organised and calculated measure whose primary objective was to prevent documentation of frontline violations whether via video recordings, photographs or live civilian testimonies.

Its direct impact also struck relief and emergency operations: ambulance and rescue teams were no longer able to coordinate, supply transfers were disrupted, making rescue of the wounded and injured near-impossible especially as about 177,000 civilians remained trapped, and roughly 28,000 people displaced over 48 hours, according to the preparatory committee of the Sudan Doctors' Syndicate.

Furthermore, the absence of direct verification channels gave perpetrators room to act outside international scrutiny and reduced the chances of prompt response or investigation, increasing the likelihood of impunity and rendering killings and extermination more brutal and systematic.

The Sudanese Journalists' Syndicate warned officially that “internet shutdowns increase the isolation of civilians, expose their lives to danger and enable perpetrators of violations to escape accountability.”

Arrests and Constraints on Journalists

On the first day the RSF entered Al-Fashir, journalist Muammar Ibrahim appeared in a video surrounded by armed RSF members. He said in a weary voice that he “tried to leave the city and was arrested,” assuring that “he is in safe hands.” The scene illustrates the full control over information and efforts to silence voices.

Muammar known for his coverage of humanitarian suffering in Al-Fashir via Al Jazeera Mubasher in recent months has been missing ever since, his fate unknown. Colleagues and local correspondents suggest he was deliberately targeted in a systematic campaign to silence independent voices documenting the siege and bombing and acting as the voice of the hungry and afflicted.

In a statement, the Sudanese Journalists' Syndicate said his arrest followed immediately the RSF takeover of the 6th Infantry Division headquarters and held the militia fully responsible for his safety.

It also warned that the wave of arrests of journalists is not isolated but part of a deliberate policy to silence witnesses and prevent the world from knowing the truth saying that what is happening in Al-Fashir is “a direct threat to press freedom and the public's right to information.”

Meanwhile, the International Federation of Journalists on 29 October 2025 condemned his arrest, calling for his immediate unconditional release. Its secretary-general, Anthony Belaïche, said that “Muammar committed no crime; he was targeted because he chose to be a witness on the ground,” and that the RSF “has deliberately attacked journalists and media institutions to silence them,” and must be held accountable for “its systematic violations of press freedom.”

Rights activists say that targeting journalists in Al-Fashir is part of a recurring pattern used by the RSF across various areas: starting with communications shut-down, then targeting reporters and photographers, before broadcasting its own narrative via its platforms making the war on words parallel to the war on the ground.

In this stifled media environment remains the story of Muammar Ibrahim the journalist who tried to convey the truth until the last moment a single example of dozens held unjustly in detention.

The War of Videos and Fabricated Content

In the hours and days following the RSF takeover of Al-Fashir, dozens of misleading images and videos spread some artificially generated using AI, many taken from earlier events or re-purposed to look like they came from the city. Local journalists repeatedly warned that the circulation of fabricated content constitutes not only an ethical error but a practical contribution to covering up truth, harming victims’ memory and distorting collective memory of a community under assault.

In one case, videos purportedly showed a field execution by an RSF commander called “Abu-Lulu” boasting of killing 2,000 people in cold blood. Some observers believe that reducing responsibility to one person and the image of “Abu-Lulu” as a lone criminal helps down-play the institutional and network responsibility of the entire militia, its allies and external backers.

The reality in Al-Fashir is not an isolated incident of one criminal: it is the extension of a coordinated campaign of siege, starvation, hospital targeting, supply-chain cuts and deliberate demographic change, with documented external support (e.g., from the UAE) despite its continuous denials.

Media and rights activists emphasize the need to preserve real evidence, widely share it, apply verification protocols and absolutely reject fabricated content as documenting truth and countering disinformation is the primary weapon for holding accountable those who planned, armed and participated in these grave crimes that do not expire.

Role of Satellite Imagery

In the face of the media blackout imposed by the RSF in Al-Fashir, independent research reports have come to the fore. A research team at Yale School of Public Health’s Humanitarian Research Lab issued a report on 27 October 2025 based on high-resolution satellite imagery and open-source digital data, confirming grave violations likely amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

According to the study, videos released by the RSF showed field executions of civilians and pursuit of unarmed individuals including women and children demonstrating the systematic nature of the violence. Satellite images showed bodies near RSF vehicles and changes in soil colour to red in multiple locations inside the city indicators of mass killing and mutilation.

The report also analysed military deployment patterns, tracking RSF vehicle movements inside the Al-Daraja-Al-Ula district, which had been the last area of civilian refuge before the city’s fall. The presence of bodies near earth-trenches at the edge of Al-Fashir matched local testimonies of field executions during civilian flight.

Observers say this report is significant because it represents one of the few verifiable pieces of evidence at a time when communications are down and media coverage is blocked, making satellite imagery and digital testimony central to documentation.

Cost of the Media Darkout on Documentation and accountability

One of the consequences of the media blackout in Al-Fashir is that it constitutes a judicial and humanitarian loss in every sense. With communications down and correspondents unable to enter, testimonies and documents are vulnerable to loss or manipulation, forcing rights organisations to rely on high-cost satellite imagery and digital evidence which, despite their technical precision, cannot replace direct field documentation.

At the same time, analysts note that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is leading a deliberate media campaign via regional influencers and content creators to white-wash the RSF’s image and justify its actions. This campaign seeks to re-shape the narrative on the Sudan war by disseminating coordinated digital content aimed at erasing crimes and misleading public opinion.

These information efforts align with a report by the Wall Street Journal which cited US defence intelligence sources that Abu Dhabi increased arms supplies to the RSF since spring 2025 including Chinese-made drones, light and heavy weapons and artillery and that more than 156 flights between UAE bases and Libya’s Qufra airport carried military/logistic supplies to the RSF in just

two and a half months until mid-October.

Based on this support the militia regained the initiative after a sequence of defeats, launched a sweeping offensive that ended in the capture of Al-Fashir after an 18-month siege during which food and medicine were blocked, further worsening the humanitarian tragedy in North Darfur.

In the absence of official data and the difficulty of field verification for journalists, independent military analysis platforms used satellite imagery and video footage to assess recent operations. One such platform estimated that a convoy trying to evacuate from Al-Fashir comprised roughly 500 vehicles stretched over more than two kilometres, and that destroying it entirely would require firepower equating to about 500 aerial munitions carrying 22.5 tons of bombs and missiles.

A quantity difficult for a paramilitary group alone, pointing to external air support or a large drone fleet. Analysts thus rule out that the strike was purely RSF logistics-driven, and suggest instead it was the result of a fighter aircraft attack, raising questions about which foreign actor carried it out and the scale of external support.

These findings, analysts say, strengthen suspicions of the RSF’s external military backing and open legal and diplomatic questions about the role of regional states in fueling the Sudanese conflict and covering up its crimes via media.