

S U D A N

SECTION A

Capital

Khartoum city 924,505 (1993 est.)

Area

2,503,890 sq km (966,757 sq mi)

Form of government

Transitional—previously ruled by military junta, Presidential and National Assembly elections were held in March 1996.

GDP—per capita

Purchasing power parity - \$940 (1999 est.)

Population

35,079,814 (July 2000 est.)

Ethnic composition

A multiethnic mix of over 500 Arab and African tribes with scores of languages and dialects

Black	52%
Arab	39%
Beja	6%
Other	3%

Official language

Arabic

Other languages

Three super stocks of spoken languages exist in Sudan:

Afro-Asiatic (e.g. Arabic, Cushitic, Chadic, Hausa employed by many other West Africans in Sudan as a lingua franca)

Niger-Kurdufanian (Niger-Congo language group and the Kurdufanian stock which comprises only thirty to forty languages spoken in a limited area of Sudan, the Nuba Mountains and their environs)

Nilo-Saharan (with 75 languages)

English also spoken

Note: A program of Arabization is currently in process

According to the Ethnologue (Summer Institute of Linguistic 1996) 132 living languages exist in Sudan.

Legislation dealing with the use of languages

Sudan Constitution as adopted June 1998 (Articles 3, 27)

Southern Regional Self Government Act (1972)

Background notes

Independence was achieved on January 1, 1956 (from Egypt and the UK).

The Constitution originally adopted on April 12, 1973, was suspended following a coup on April 6, 1985. An interim Constitution from October 10, 1985 was suspended following a coup on June 30, 1989. A new Constitution was implemented on June 30, 1998.

Ever since its independence in 1956, Sudan has known peace for only eleven years, 1972 - 1983 following the peace accord signed in Addis Ababa between the North and the South. After that millions have been killed or displaced and starved while thousands have been maimed as a result of civil war.

The seventeen-year conflict between the South and North was resolved in March 1972. This agreement guaranteed the integration of all the regions within one united Sudan. The Southern regional government could exercise executive powers with an independent Public Service Commission, and a Southern Peoples' Regional Assembly with legislative powers established in Juba. This accord brought some stability and peace to the South.

In 1983 the Addis Ababa Agreement was dismantled and abrogated and followed by implementation of Islamic law throughout the country.

During the four years after the fall of the socialist dictator Nimeiri in 1985, Sudan went through a period of turbulent semi-democracy. Throughout this period, there was a bloody civil war, north against south.

The 1989 military coup that overthrew Sudan's democratically elected government brought to power Lieutenant General Omar Hassan Al-Bashir and his National Salvation Revolution Command Council (RCC). Bashir and the RCC suspended the 1985 Constitution, abrogated press freedom, and disbanded all political parties and trade unions.

In 1995, the country was federated into 26 States, each with elected Parliaments. The relationship between the State and Federal Governments is set forth in the Twelfth Constitutional Amendment. In the same year, the Thirteenth Constitutional Decree and Public Elections Act, both made in 1995, set up a complete system of election, and appointment where appropriate, for every official in the country.

The Peace Agreement, signed in Khartoum on April 21, 1997 between the Government and elements of the rebel movement, promises a free and fair referendum for South Sudan after a four-year transition period. The choice on the ballot paper will be between secession and continued federation. The 1997 agreement remains largely unimplemented, and there was significant fighting between pro-government and antigovernment elements of the Southern Sudan Independence Movement (SSIM) throughout the year of 1999.

Despite the adoption of a new Constitution through a referendum in June of 1998, the Government continues to restrict most civil liberties. Since 1989 real power has rested with the National Islamic Front (NIF). In November of 1998, the NIF renamed itself the National Congress (NC). NIF/NC members and supporters continue to hold key positions in the Government, security forces, judiciary, academic institutions, and the media.

The Government continues to severely restrict the freedom of assembly, association, religion, and movement. In the context of the Islamization and Arabization drive, pressure (including forced Islamization) on non-Muslims remained strong. Fears of Arabization and Islamization and the imposition of Shari'a (Islamic law) have fueled support for the civil war throughout the country.

There are no independent human rights organizations.

SECTION B

Where does one observe language to be a problem in the country?

Choice of language played a political role in the ethnic and religious cleavage between the northern and southern Sudanese. English was associated with being non-Muslim, as Arabic was associated with Islam. Thus language was a political instrument and a symbol of identity.

Language differences have served as a partial basis for ethnic classification and as symbols of ethnic identity.

The Arabised Muslim culture in the north and central areas and the non-Muslim African culture in the south are the two dominant cultures. Northern Muslims, who form a majority of about 16 million, traditionally have dominated the Government. The southern ethnic groups fighting the civil war (largely followers of traditional indigenous religions or Christians) total approximately 6 million and seek independence, or some form of regional self-determination, from the north.

The Muslim majority and the NIF/NC-dominated Government continued to discriminate against ethnic minorities in almost every aspect of society. Citizens in Arabic-speaking areas who do not speak Arabic experienced discrimination in education, employment, and other areas. The use of Arabic as the language of instruction in higher education discriminated against non-Arabs. For university admission, students completing high school are required to pass examinations in four subjects: English language; mathematics; Arabic language; and religious studies. Even at the university level, examinations in all subjects except English language were in the Arabic language, placing nonnative speakers of Arabic at a disadvantage.

The use of language in everyday life e.g. education, broadcasting and other

Because the number of languages and dialects is assumed to be about 400, several lingua francas have emerged and many peoples have become genuinely multilingual, fluent in a native language spoken at home, a lingua franca, and perhaps other languages.

Arabic is the primary lingua franca in Sudan, given its status as the country's official language and as the language of Islam. Arabic, however, has several different forms, and not all who master one are able to use another. Among the varieties noted by scholars are classical Arabic, the language of the Koran (although generally not a spoken language and

only used for printed work and by the educated in conversation); Modern Standard Arabic which despite its international character, varies from country to country. It has been, however, the language used in Sudan's central government, the press, and Radio Omdurman.

There are also colloquial forms of Arabic e.g. Sudanese colloquial Arabic or a pidgin called Juba Arabic is peculiar to southern Sudan.

Despite Arabic's status as the official national language, English was acknowledged as the principal language in southern Sudan in the late 1980s. It was also the chief language at the University of Khartoum and was the language of secondary schools even in the north before 1969. The new policy for higher education announced by the Sudanese government in 1990 indicated the language of instruction in all institutions of higher learning would be Arabic.

Nevertheless, in the south, the first two years of primary school were taught in the local language. Thereafter, through secondary school, either Arabic or English could become the medium of instruction (English and Arabic were regarded as of equal importance); the language not used as a medium was taught as a subject. In the early 1970s, when this option was established, roughly half the general secondary classes (equivalent to grades seven through nine) were conducted in Arabic and half in English in Bahr al Ghazal and Al Istiwai provinces. In early 1991, with about 90 percent of the southern third of the country controlled by the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), the use of Arabic as a medium of instruction in southern schools remained a political issue, with many southerners regarding Arabic as an element in northern cultural domination.

Juba (or pidgin) Arabic, developed and learned informally, had been used in southern towns, particularly in Al Istiwai, for some time and had spread slowly but steadily throughout the south, but not always at the expense of English. The Juba Arabic used in the marketplace and even by political figures addressing ethnically mixed urban audiences could not be understood by northern Sudanese.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF SUDAN



APPENDIX B

SUDAN - CONSTITUTION

(Authorised English Version)

(Adopted in June 1998)

Article 3 (Language)

Arabic is the official language in the Republic of the Sudan; and the State shall allow the development of other local and international languages.

Article 27 (Sanctity of cultural communities)

There shall be guaranteed for every community or group of citizens the right to preserve their particular culture, language or religion, and rear children freely within the framework of their particularity, and the same shall not by coercion be effaced.

Note: We acknowledge with thanks data from The Sudan Foundation, London.

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