



Sudan at Crossroads

**After 1000 Days of War: Crisis, Impact, and Pathways to
Recovery and Resilience**

Sudan Scope Media and Research

Key Takeaways on the Economic Cost of War in Sudan

I. Poverty, Income Level, and Unemployment

- The war has pushed Sudan's economy back by more than three decades, with severe deterioration in poverty, income, and growth indicators.
- After three years of conflict, Sudan is no longer facing a temporary economic shock; the country is experiencing a systemic erosion of its long-term development prospects.
- If the conflict persists through 2030, an additional **34 million people could fall into extreme poverty**.
- Poverty could **exceed 80%** of the population by 2030 if the conflict continues.
- **Household income levels** have fallen back to the equivalent of **1992 levels**.
- Around **34 million additional** people are at risk of falling into poverty.
- Approximately 7 million people fell into extreme poverty within a single year.
- More than **13 million people** have been internally and externally displaced.
- The economy could face a cumulative GDP gap of US\$34.5 billion relative to a no-conflict baseline.
- Unemployment rate has risen sharply to around **60.6% in 2025** and is projected to increase further to **61.3% in 2026**, reflecting the severe disruption of economic activity, widespread displacement, business closures, and the continued deterioration in productive sectors amid the ongoing conflict.

II. Macroeconomic Impact of the War

- Sudan's economy contracted by **nearly 40% in 2023** due to the outbreak of war on 15th April 2023.
- The economy also remained in deep recession in 2024, with GDP estimated to have **contracted by 15.1%**.
- 2025, economic activity continued to decline sharply by an additional **7% amid** the ongoing conflict, reflecting the persistent disruption of economic activity, destruction of productive capacity, widespread displacement, and the deterioration in trade, investment, and labor market conditions.
- GDP has contracted sharply, while economic activity and productive capacity continue to deteriorate.
- Living conditions have worsened significantly, with rising food insecurity, unemployment, and displacement.
- Even if the conflict ends soon, recovery is expected to remain gradual and below the average growth rates observed in low-income countries.
- Persistent conflict risks deepening structural fragilities, weakening institutions, and undermining future investment and reconstruction prospects.

- **To Sum (economic loss for war so far), the estimated total productive infrastructure and capital stock for Sudan amounts to \$600 billion (this is not Sudan's GDP); its calculations are different. If we consider that we have already lost about 30% of this stock, our losses amount to \$180 billion.**

III. Current Middle East Conflict. War on Iran and Its Implications on Sudan

- The ongoing war involving Iran and the heightened risk of disruption in the Strait of Hormuz represent a significant external shock for Sudan's already fragile economy.
- The impact is being transmitted primarily through higher fuel and LPG cooking gas prices, rising fertilizer and freight costs, exchange rate depreciation, and worsening inflationary pressures.
- Sudan's ongoing conflict amplifies these vulnerabilities through disrupted supply chains, weak fiscal capacity, and heavy reliance on imports.

IV. Recovery Path and Reform Scenario

- Under a peace and reform scenario, Sudan's GDP could reach US\$58.2 billion by 2043.
- Economic growth could accelerate to around 5% over the medium term.
- Approximately 17.3 million people could be lifted out of extreme poverty under a successful recovery path.
- Recovery will require rebuilding institutions, restoring macroeconomic stability, and reviving productive sectors.
- **Peace is necessary, but not sufficient. Durable recovery depends on credible reforms, institutional rebuilding, and sustained international support to restore confidence and mobilize financing.**

1. Real Sector. War and Its Aftermath

1.1 Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Following the outbreak of conflict in 2023, **Sudan experienced one of the most severe economic contractions in its modern history, with real GDP estimated to have declined by 40% in 2023 (Chart 1)**, reflecting the widespread disruption of economic activity, destruction of infrastructure, displacement of labor, and collapse in production and trade networks. Although the pace of contraction moderated thereafter, economic conditions remained exceptionally fragile, with output estimated to have declined by **a further 15.1% in 2024 amid continued insecurity, supply disruptions, and weakening private sector activity. In 2025, the economy is estimated to have contracted by 7.2%** percent, suggesting a gradual easing in the magnitude of the downturn, supported by a limited recovery in some productive activities and adaptive responses by households and businesses. Nevertheless, GDP remains significantly below pre-conflict levels, underscoring the substantial economic and social costs of the conflict and the importance of restoring stability, rebuilding institutions, and supporting recovery efforts.

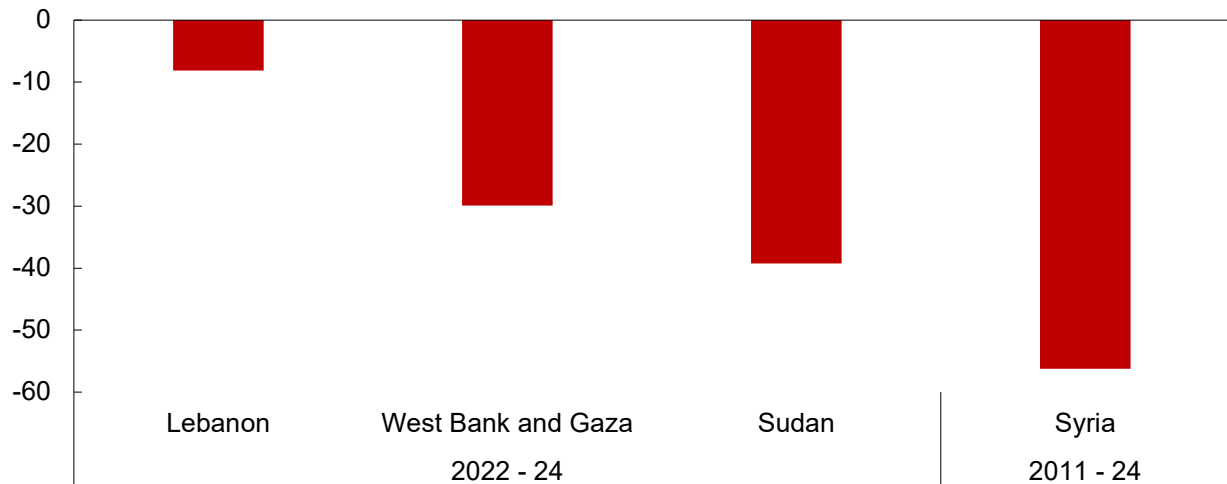
Chart 1: Gross Domestic Product During (2010- 2025)



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics & IMF Estimates

Cross-Country Comparison: Conflict undermined Sudan's economic growth: this needs expectational policy rethinking to bring Sudan back on the road to stabilization

Chart 2: Economies in conflict experienced considerable output losses

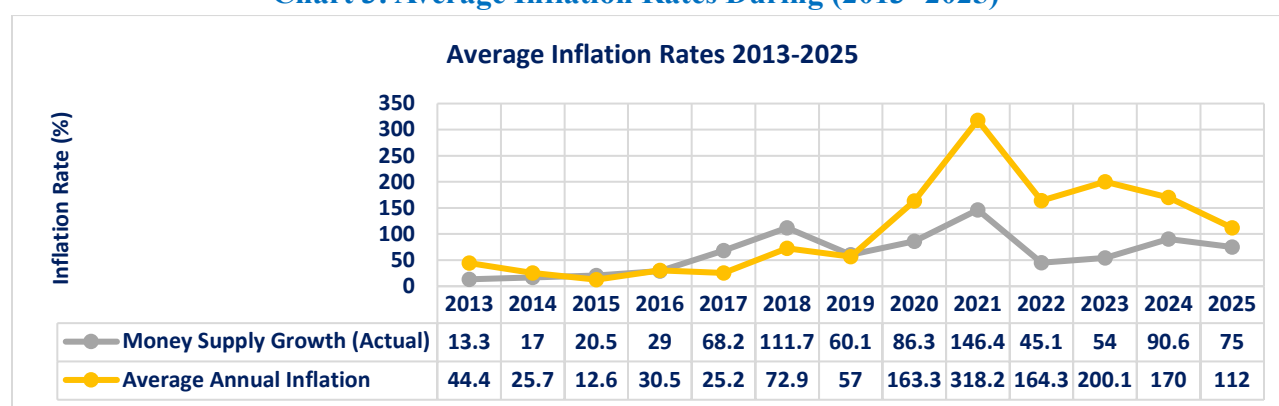


Sources: IMF, World Economic Outlook database; national authorities; World Bank estimates; and IMF staff calculations.

1.2 Inflation Rates

Inflationary pressures intensified significantly during the war period, reflecting severe **supply disruptions, exchange rate depreciation, monetization of fiscal deficits, and weakening domestic production capacity**. Average annual inflation rose sharply to 200.1 percent in 2023, following **164.3% in 2022**, driven by shortages of essential goods, disruptions to trade and transport networks, and reduced foreign exchange availability. Although inflation moderated to **170% in 2024 and further to 112% in 2025** (Chart 3), price pressures remained exceptionally elevated by historical standards, reflecting continued macroeconomic instability, supply-side constraints, and rapid growth in money supply. The persistence of high inflation has substantially eroded household purchasing power and exacerbated socio-economic vulnerabilities across the country.

Chart 3: Average Inflation Rates During (2013- 2025)



Sudan: Central Bureau of Statistics

2. Fiscal Policy: Tax Policy Updates

2.1 Custom Rates Update

Sudan’s adjustment of the customs valuation exchange rate “**customs dollar**” reflects an effort to align customs valuation practices with the official exchange rate framework. While such alignment is, in principle, a sound policy objective, **experience suggests that raising the customs dollar in isolation is unlikely to generate durable gains in fiscal revenues under current economic conditions**.

The recent increase in April 2026 from SDG 2,769 to SDG 3,223—equivalent to roughly a **16% rise** in the effective tax burden on imports—mirrors previous adjustments, including the **27% increase** implemented in August 2022, which did not produce a meaningful improvement in revenue collection. This outcome reflects deeper structural constraints within the economy.

Weak purchasing power continues to suppress import demand, while higher tax rates tend to encourage informality, smuggling, and tax evasion. Limited market competition further amplifies

price pressures, as firms often pass higher import costs disproportionately onto consumers. More importantly, frequent and unpredictable adjustments to the customs dollar contribute to rising inflation expectations, weaken policy credibility, and further erode real household incomes.

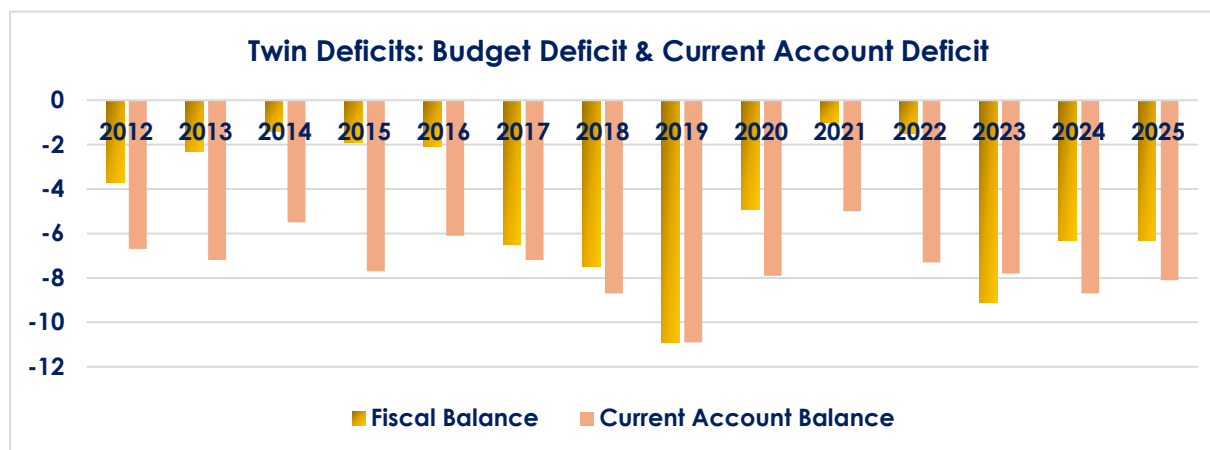
These dynamics are compounded by Sudan's narrow and highly distortionary tax structure, where more than **90% of revenues** are derived **from indirect taxes (on imports and value-added tax)**, while direct taxes account for less than **10%**. Such heavy reliance on trade and consumption-based taxation limits the effectiveness of repeated rate increases and increases the burden on consumers and productive sectors.

In this context, sustainable revenue mobilization requires a broader reform agenda centered on raising the tax-to-GDP ratio through widening the tax base, strengthening tax administration, improving compliance, reducing excessive reliance on trade taxes, and restoring macroeconomic stability and policy credibility. **IMF-supported reform frameworks implemented during the transitional period (September 2019–October 2021) had already provided a broad roadmap for fiscal and institutional reform. However, the October 2021 military coup disrupted reform momentum, weakened institutional coordination, and significantly increased macroeconomic and political uncertainty.**

2.2 Budget Deficit. Persistent Budget Deficit Amid Continued Conflict

Challenges include weak tax collection, low domestic revenue mobilization, increased expenditure on security and defense, **funding war efforts**, and employee compensation. **The fiscal deficit widened substantially to 6.1% of GDP in 2025. This increase was attributed to a significant drop in government revenues amid ongoing armed conflict, which severely disrupted economic activities and diminished the tax base. The conflict led to a significant deficit in the current account balance to GDP of 9.0% in 2024 and 8.1% in 2025 (Chart 4) due to the destruction of production capacity and displacement of populations.**

Chart 4: Sudan's Twin Deficits Phenomenon (2012-2024)



Source: Government State's Budget (MOFEP), Sudan Article IV Consultation Reports, IMF

3. Sudan's External Sector

Overall, a persistent trade deficit can put pressure on a country's currency. Sudan consistently imports more than it exports. The economy appeared to have lost a substantial share of its productivity and export capacity, particularly in agriculture-related sectors. Export data for 2025 pointed out three major structural trends:

- a sharp decline in total export value,
- reduced export diversification, and
- increasing reliance on gold exports.

3.1 Export Activity Update. Sudan's Exports Recorded an Unprecedented Decline in 2025

- a. **Sudan's exports declined sharply to approximately US\$2.64 billion in 2025**, marking the lowest level recorded in a decade.
 - This reflected the severe economic disruptions stemming from the conflict that erupted in April 2023, which significantly impaired productive and service-sector activities across the economy.
- b. **The contraction in exports highlighted the continued deep recession of the Sudanese economy.**
 - According to Central Bank data, the economy remained under acute stress, with weakened productive capacity, lower export diversification, and declining foreign exchange earnings.
- c. **The deterioration in export performance increased pressure on the balance of payments and exchange rate stability.**
 - Lower export receipts reduced the economy's ability to finance essential imports and weakened external sector resilience.

3.1.1 Export Structure. Rising Dependence on Gold

- a. **The composition of exports became increasingly unbalanced in 2025.**
 - Traditional productive sectors, particularly agriculture, experienced a substantial decline, while the relative share of gold increased mainly because of the collapse of other export sectors rather than improved gold-sector performance.
- b. **The economy became more dependent on a single commodity export.**
 - This heightened vulnerability to external shocks and commodity price fluctuations, while reducing the stabilizing role historically played by agricultural and livestock exports.
- c. **Most exports continued to consist of raw commodities with limited value addition.**

- This underscored the economy’s limited structural transformation and persistent reliance on extractive activities rather than diversified production and industrialization.

3.1.2 Agricultural Sector. Severe Contraction even

- a. **Agricultural exports declined to around US\$604 million in 2025**, compared with:
 - US\$1.0 billion in 2024, and
 - US\$1.68 billion in 2022.
- b. **The sharp decline reflected widespread disruptions in agricultural production.**
 - Large areas of farmland became inaccessible, while shortages of fuel, fertilizers, and essential inputs disrupted production cycles and supply chains.
- c. **Security conditions significantly constrain agricultural activity.**
 - Conflict-affected areas experienced severe production interruptions, while the displacement of farmers and agricultural labor further reduced productivity.
- d. **Harvesting, transportation, and market access were also severely affected.**
 - The deterioration was broad-based across most crops, indicating a systemic crisis in the sector.
- e. **Agriculture, historically a key pillar of Sudan’s economy, became one of the sectors most severely affected by the conflict.**
 - Its diminished contribution weakened export performance and reduced foreign exchange generation.

3.1.3 Cash Crops. Sharp Collapse in Export Earnings

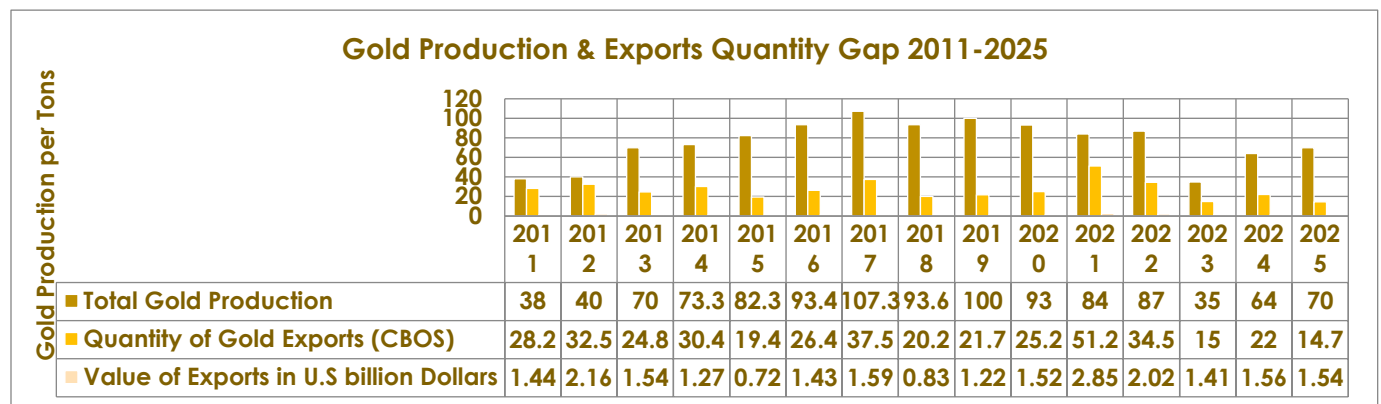
- a. **Groundnut exports fell dramatically to around US\$2 million in 2025**, compared with:
 - US\$293 million in 2024, and
 - US\$351 million in 2022.
- b. **The collapse reflected near paralysis in production and export activities**, largely driven by deteriorating security and economic conditions.
- c. **Cotton exports declined to approximately US\$64 million in 2025**, compared with US\$384 million in 2022.
 - This highlighted Sudan’s continued loss of competitiveness in global cotton markets amid prolonged structural weaknesses exacerbated by the conflict.
- d. **The decline in cash crops also affected broader value chains**, including agro-processing industries, employment, and rural incomes, thereby intensifying economic hardship.

3.1.4 Gold Exports. The paradox of rich resources and a weak economy

- a. **Gold remained Sudan’s largest export commodity in 2025 (Chart 5)**, with exports reaching about US\$1.54 billion, compared with:

- **US\$1.57 billion in 2024, and**
- **nearly US\$2 billion in 2022.**
- b. The rising share of gold in total exports did not reflect genuine sectoral expansion.** Instead, it primarily resulted from the sharp contraction of other export sectors.
- c. The gold sector continued to face major structural challenges, including:**
 - widespread smuggling and weak regulatory oversight,
 - limited transparency, and the influence of informal actors in production areas.
- d. Heavy dependence on gold increased external vulnerability.** Exposure to volatile international gold prices made export earnings less stable and reduced long-term sustainability.

Chart 5: Gold Production and Exports During (2011- 2025)



Source: Foreign Trade Statistical Digest, CBOS.

3.1.5 Livestock Exports: Continued Weakness

- a. Livestock exports declined to approximately US\$471 million in 2025, compared with:**
 - **US\$535 million in 2024, and**
 - **US\$551 million in 2022.**
- b. The deterioration reflected disruptions in transportation and export logistics.**
 - Security conditions constrained the movement of livestock between production areas and export markets.
- c. Exports of camels and cattle weakened notably, while sheep exports remained relatively more stable.**
- d. Processed meat exports also continued to decline, despite the partial reopening of some slaughterhouses, indicating that recovery remained limited and uneven.**

3.2 Imports Activity Update. Rising Dependence on Food and Energy Imports

- a. Sudan's import structure in 2025 continued to reflect heavy dependence on essential commodities amid ongoing conflict and severe foreign exchange shortages. Imports of only**

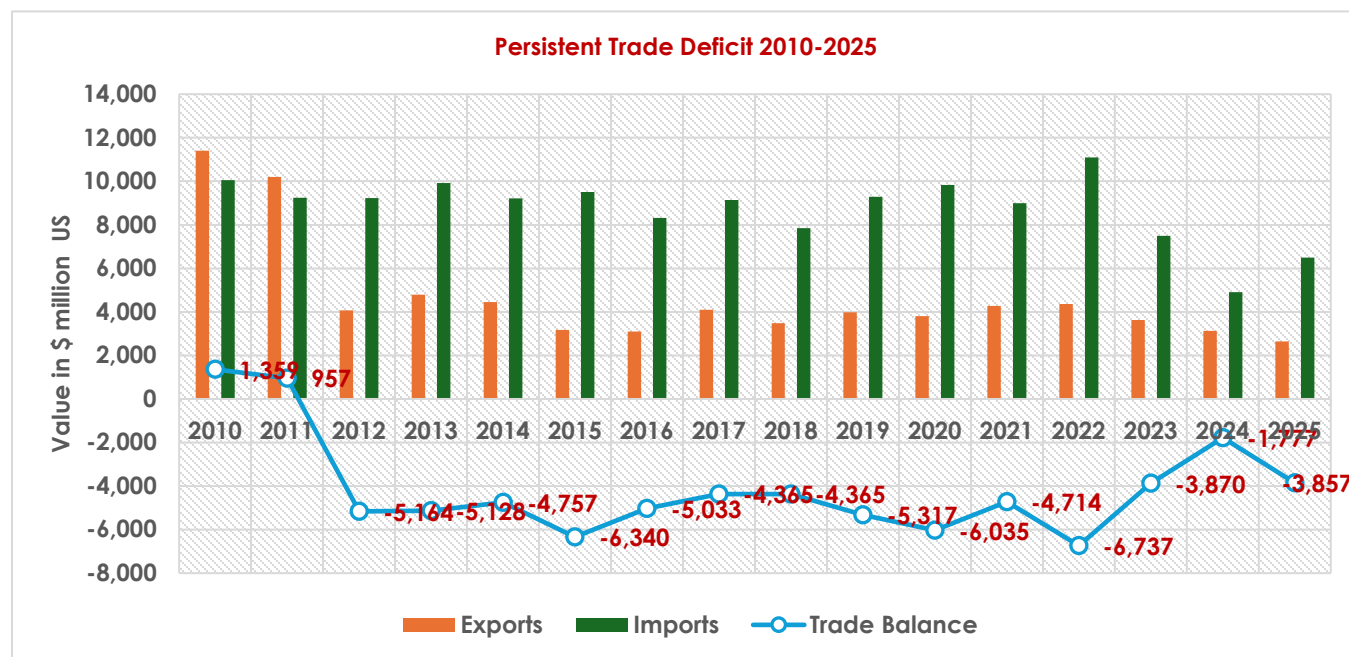
four key items—petroleum products, sugar, wheat, and wheat flour—exceeded US\$2 billion, accounting for approximately 32 percent of the country’s estimated total import bill of US\$6.3 billion.

- b. Petroleum imports remained the largest component at around US\$808 million, reflecting the disruption of domestic refining capacity and oil production during the conflict. Sugar imports reached approximately US\$553 million, while wheat and wheat flour imports totaled around US\$646 million combined.
- c. The high concentration of imports in a limited number of essential goods highlights Sudan’s growing vulnerability to external shocks, particularly fluctuations in global commodity prices and exchange rate pressures, while underscoring the country’s increasing dependence on external markets for food and energy security.

3.3 Trade Balance. Persistent Trade Deficit

The Cost of Mismanagement of Natural Resources in Sudan: Illicit gold and illicit financial flows are key drivers for undermining Sudan’s external sector performance! A significant decline in the SDG's value. Unfortunately, further devaluation episodes are likely if the war persists. Trade deficit widened to USD 3.8 billion in 2025, largely because exports fell sharply (**Chart 6**).

Chart 6: Trade Balance Developments During (2010- 2023)



Source: Foreign Trade Statistical Digest, CBOS

3.4 Exchange Rate Update. Continued SDG Depreciation

- Exchange Rate Update. The SDG's value against the US dollar has devalued by over 600% in the past 3 years (since the outbreak of war). Given the evolving political landscape, we expect the SDG to continue devaluing and, in turn, worsen the cost of living.
- The continued decline in exports further constrained foreign exchange inflows, increasing pressures on the domestic currency and limiting the country's ability to finance imports.

Table 1: Exchange Rate Developments During (2015- May 2026)

Month	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Jan	8.8	11.55	19	25	51	87	258	452	580	1150	2650	3700
Feb	9.05	12	17.5	39	71	99	345	490	590	1200	2700	3700
Mar	9.1	12.27	17.8	31	68	117	376	520	600	1350	2660	3800
Apr	9.3	13	17.8	33	71	140	384	575	600	1460	2700	3900
May	9.6	13.9	18.2	37	68	131	400	570	600	1450	2660	4200
Jun	9.55	13.9	18.3	37.8	65	143	490	568	590	1860	2600	
Jul	9.55	15	18.6	47	72	138	460	568	595	2450	2750	
Aug	9.8	15.6	21.5	47	68	144	445	570	640	2550	3100	
Sep	9.85	14	21.43	40	83	205	445	578	715	2800	3500	
Oct	10.1	15.5	20	45.2	72.5	245	450	580	825	2800	3550	
Nov	11.3	16	22.2	48	82	240	450	582	1000	2700	3650	
Dec	11.3	18.8	26.3	55	82	268	450	580	1060	2600	3650	

3.5 Restriction of Luxury Goods Imports to Rationalize Foreign Exchange Use and Stabilize the Exchange Rate

The decision is unlikely to result in any meaningful economic or foreign exchange benefits, given the scale of Sudan's external imbalances and import requirements.

In April 2026, the authorities issued a decision to restrict the importation of a few goods based on a list identified by the Ministry of Trade. The measures covered products such as confectionery and biscuits, mineral beverages, cement and stone products, ready-made garments, as well as selected vegetables, fruits, and related products.

However, available data indicate that the total value of imports covered by these restrictions does not exceed US\$200 million, distributed approximately as follows:

- Ready-made garments: US\$72.2 million
- Vegetables, fruits, and related products: US\$67.9 million
- Mineral beverages: US\$25.9 million
- Confectionery and biscuits: US\$25.1 million

These figures suggest that even if the restrictions were fully effective, the resulting foreign exchange savings would represent only a marginal reduction relative to Sudan's total import bill, which exceeds US\$6 billion annually.

This highlights that import restrictions targeting luxury or non-essential goods, while potentially carrying symbolic importance in promoting consumption rationalization, remain insufficient to address the structural imbalance in the trade balance and the broader external sector challenges facing the economy.

Ultimately, the ongoing conflict remains the dominant factor behind the worsening economic deterioration. As such, efforts aimed solely at compressing imports, without a ceasefire and broader macroeconomic stabilization, are unlikely to provide more than temporary and limited relief.

4. Sudan's Private Sector in Crisis: War Impacts and Recovery Priorities

According to the latest United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Sudan Office Strategy for Private Sector Engagement (2026–2028), unlocking private sector potential will be central to Sudan's economic recovery and resilience following more than three years of conflict.

4.1 Impact of the War on Sudan's Private Sector

- a. The shock has been broad-based and structural in nature. Estimates suggest that nearly one-third of firms have ceased operations, implying that one in three businesses has closed.
- b. The closure rate rises to **35.2%** in high-conflict areas and reaches a severe **87.8%** among displaced firms, reflecting an almost complete collapse of formal economic activity in war-affected regions.
- c. Only **36.8%** of firms continue to operate at full capacity, while among displaced firms, the share operating fully declines sharply to just **10.9%**.
- d. Firms have experienced substantial revenue losses. Average sales among micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) declined by **35.8%**, **exceeding 50%** in the areas most affected by conflict.
- e. Sectoral impacts reveal significant divergence. Manufacturing and construction contracted by **47.2%**, compared with a decline of around 29% in agriculture and mining, suggesting relative resilience in rural and extractive activities.
- f. Labor market conditions deteriorated sharply, with the average number of workers per firm falling by nearly half, from **7.6 workers to 3.9 workers**.
- g. This deterioration was compounded by large-scale displacement affecting nearly 13 million people, contributing to labor market fragmentation and weakening both supply and demand conditions.
- h. In Khartoum State alone, more than 3,100 industrial establishments were destroyed, looted, or forced to close, resulting in **20.8%** of urban households losing their primary source of income.

- i. Operational constraints remain severe and multidimensional. Around 30% of firms in conflict areas lack access to electricity, while **13%** face water shortages.
- j. About **37.6%** of firms identify liquidity shortages as a major constraint, while **46.8%** cite limited market access as their principal challenge, reflecting supply chain disruptions and fragmentation of trade corridors.
- k. Financial intermediation remains extremely weak. Even before the war, private sector credit accounted for **only 5.6% of GDP**, a situation that has deteriorated further amid the disruption of the banking system.
- l. Despite these conditions, signs of adaptive resilience are emerging. Around **70.9%** of MSMEs plan to reopen within the next 12 months. In addition, **76%** of firms expect sales to improve, albeit from very low levels. Establishing credit guarantee mechanisms and expanding access to finance will therefore be critical to supporting private sector recovery.

4.2 Policy Priorities

- a. Security First: Around **62.4%** of firms identify insecurity as the primary reason for closure, making the restoration of stability a prerequisite for recovery.
- b. Enhancing Liquidity: With formal financing severely disrupted, there is a need to expand concessional finance, leverage diaspora remittances, and strengthen community-based financing mechanisms.
- c. Reconnecting Markets: Addressing fragmented supply chains and rising transit costs remains essential, particularly as these constraints affect nearly **46.8%** of firms.
- d. Infrastructure and Energy: Expanding decentralized energy solutions is critical amid widespread electricity shortages.
- e. Focusing on Resilient Sectors: Agriculture, livestock, and informal enterprises remain essential pillars sustaining economic activity during the conflict.
- f. Supporting Business Reopening: Priority should be given to micro and small enterprises, given their relatively faster recovery potential, with **37.6%** able to resume operations within three months.

5. Transmission Channels. Middle East conflict and Hormuz Blockade on Sudan.

A blockage or severe disruption in the Strait of Hormuz would affect Sudan mainly through the following channels

- a. **Fuel Price Channel.** The most immediate transmission channel is through higher global oil and refined fuel prices. The Strait of Hormuz normally carries around 20% of global oil trade, and disruptions have pushed international oil prices sharply higher. Sudan, which depends heavily on imported petroleum products, has therefore experienced rising domestic gasoline and diesel prices. Higher fuel costs increase transportation, electricity generation, irrigation, and production costs across the economy, feeding directly into inflation and higher living

costs. As a result, several Sudanese states have adjusted fuel prices upward, with significant implications for household purchasing power and the overall cost of living. Recent reports indicate that fuel prices in Sudan have risen by around 30% amid the regional escalation.

- b. **LPG Cooking Gas Channel.** Sudan is also affected by higher LPG cooking gas prices, which directly impact households. Regional tensions, shipping disruptions, and higher transport and insurance costs in Gulf routes have increased the landed cost of LPG imports. This has led to higher retail prices for cooking gas cylinders across Sudan, worsening living conditions for low-income households already affected by war and displacement. Like fuel products, several states have adjusted LPG cooking gas prices upward in response to rising import and transportation costs, adding further pressure on household welfare and food preparation costs.
- c. **Fertilizer and Food Security Channel.** The conflict has also increased fertilizer prices globally due to higher energy and shipping costs. Fertilizer and sulfur exports moving through Hormuz are particularly vulnerable to disruption. For Sudan, this raises agricultural production costs at a time when farming activity is already constrained by insecurity and displacement. Reports indicate fertilizer prices in some Sudanese markets increased from **around \$11 to nearly \$50 per bag**. Higher fertilizer costs are likely to reduce planting and agricultural productivity, increasing food insecurity and domestic food prices in the coming seasons.
- d. **Freight and Shipping Channel.** The regional conflict has also increased freight costs, war-risk insurance premiums, and shipping delays across the Red Sea and Gulf routes. Humanitarian and commercial shipments to Sudan are becoming more expensive due to rerouting, port congestion, and higher fuel costs. This raises the landed prices of fuel, wheat, medicines, machinery, and other essential imports, intensifying imported inflation pressures throughout the economy.
- e. **Exchange Rate and Inflation Channel.** The shock is also being transmitted through the foreign exchange market. Rising import bills for fuel, LPG cooking gas, wheat, and freight services have sharply increased demand for foreign currency, while export earnings remain weak due to the war. This has contributed to continued depreciation pressures on the Sudanese pound. Since the escalation of the Iran conflict, the Sudanese pound has reportedly depreciated by around **30% the parallel market**, further amplifying imported inflation and eroding household purchasing power.

6. A Path Toward Well-crafted and Carefully Sequenced Reforms for Economic Recovery.

Post-War Policy Priorities: Ensuring Macroeconomic Stabilization & Establishing an Environment for Reform, include the following:

- a. **Promoting peace and providing equal opportunities for all Sudanese. Only civilian rule can bring Sudan the much-needed peace.** Strengthening governance and institutional capacity.

b. Restoring Macroeconomic Stability.

- **Reform plan is appropriately focused on fiscal and Monetary policies.**
- **Financial sector reforms are essential to support growth and stability in post-war Sudan.**

c. Structural policy

- **Advance SOE reforms to promote competition, strengthen governance, and stimulate private sector participation in the economy.**
- **Create an enabling business environment.**

d. Dismantling Sudan's security-business networks and empowering its productive private sector. Unlocking Sudan's private sector potential is key to robust and inclusive growth.

e. Digital Transformation to build a better data economy. Digital adoption is associated with the government's effectiveness and the mitigation of the impact of war shocks.