Report

Smuggled Gold in Sudan:
A Shadow Economy That Funds the War
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Introduction:

Since the outbreak of armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on April 15, 2023, the mining sector has experienced a strategic shift in the priorities of the conflicting parties. Both sides have moved toward systematic control of gold mines and export outlets as part of a clear strategy to sustain military operations through stable funding sources.

RSF and the SAF have entered into agreements with foreign mining companies, taking advantage of the lack of formal institutional oversight. UN reports have documented ongoing gold smuggling operations, indicating that RSF has established extensive financial networks facilitating the flow of weapons and military equipment to the battlefield. The RSF employs a dual smuggling model: one is institutionalized through the Al-Juneid Company, while the other is informal, relying on personnel operating along smuggling routes on the border with South Sudan through the Darfur region. Similarly, SAF utilizes government institutions and a network of private companies owned by military and state leaders to export large quantities of gold abroad—both formally and informally—through entities such as the Sudanese Mineral Resources Company and various individuals or businesses.

The impacts of these practices are evident at economic, social, and political levels. Economically, the diversion of gold resources outside official channels has deprived the public treasury of vital revenues, worsening the country's financial crisis. Global markets have seen a significant rise in gold imports from several regional countries, confirming the scale of organized smuggling. On the humanitarian front, military control over mining areas has exacerbated the suffering of local communities, leading to increased violations and forced displacement. Politically, the ongoing flow of financial resources has prolonged the conflict and undermined national mediation and reconciliation efforts, as gold revenues have granted the conflicting parties financial independence, enabling them to continue military operations despite international pressure.

Report Methodology:

This report investigates the economic mechanisms driving the continuation of the conflict in Sudan, focusing on the exploitation of gold resources as a primary funding source for the military operations of the conflicting parties. It reveals networks of cooperation between local and foreign companies and the conflicting forces in the extraction, smuggling, and export of gold to neighboring and regional countries. The report also analyzes the role of economic institutions owned by the parties to the conflict and foreign companies complicit in the supply chain, highlighting the overlap between economic interests and military objectives. Additionally, it examines the routes used in gold smuggling and how these operations convert into revenues that fuel the country’s ongoing military efforts.

The study aims to explain the significant increase in gold imports into global markets from several countries following the outbreak of war in Sudan, emphasizing the commercial entities involved in facilitating gold smuggling in collaboration with the conflicting parties and the crucial role this resource plays in fueling the emerging war economy. The report adopts a

research methodology based on open-source analysis, along with confidential interviews with key sources in mining areas, former employees of Sudanese mining companies, and traders in the gold sector. It also tracks the unprecedented increases in gold exports from several countries, such as the United Arab Emirates, South Sudan, Chad, Uganda, and Kenya, since the onset of the Sudanese conflict.

Historical Background on the Gold Trade in Sudan:

Gold significantly contributes to Sudan's formal GDP, as reported by the Ministries of Finance and Minerals. Despite nearly two years of ongoing conflict, Sudan's gold exports have reportedly increased over this period. Significant capital has been directed toward traditional mining operations due to the cessation of investment, a decline in economic and commercial activity, substantial destruction of the industrial sector, and the collapse of the real estate market.

Artisanal gold mining is prevalent across large areas, concentrated in 14 of the country's 18 states[1]. It employs over two million people and accounts for approximately 80% of the total gold production, according to the Mineral Resources Company, which is affiliated with the Ministry of Minerals. The Ministry reports that there are more than 400 companies active in exploration and mining[2], while official figures on the Central Bank's gold reserves are lacking.

Artisanal mining activities thrive through the extraction of stones containing gold particles. Gold is extracted after grinding these stones in mills, which can be either manual or modern. The stones are obtained from deep wells drilled along specific stone lines, indicating the presence of the precious metal through metal detectors.

In 2022, gold revenues amounted to approximately $2 billion, with sales to the UAE totaling around 34,476 kilograms, according to the Sudanese Foreign Trade Statistical Summary for the fiscal year 2022[3]. However, the 2024 statistics show a decrease to 22,918 kilograms, valued at $1,570[4].

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1 https://cbos.gov.sd/sites/default/files/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%88%D8%AC%D8%B2%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%B9%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B9%20%D9%A0%D9%A2%D9%A4.pdf

2 https://cbos.gov.sd/sites/default/files/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%88%D8%AC%D8%B2%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%B9%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B9%20%D9%A0%D9%A2%D9%A4.pdf

3 https://cbos.gov.sd/sites/default/files/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%B9%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B9%202022.pdf

4 https://cbos.gov.sd/sites/default/files/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%88%D8%AC%D8%B2%20%D8%A7%D9%84



With the secession of South Sudan in 2011, Sudan lost its oil revenues and exports, which had been a crucial strength for the Sudanese economy from 1999 to 2011. Gold has since become a significant tool in the political struggle over Sudan's resources at local, regional, and international levels. Despite the economic and political value of gold and its export revenues, official statistics indicate that approximately 80% of Sudan's gold production is smuggled out of the country. Additionally, illegal mining causes environmental damage that significantly impacts the health, social, and economic conditions of local communities. The warring parties in Sudan utilize several routes to smuggle and export gold, including land routes used by the RSF via South Sudan, the Central African Republic, and Chad; routes used by the army via Egypt; and air routes employed by both sides, such as Nyala Airport, controlled by the RSF, and Port Sudan Airport, controlled by the SAF.

The Role of the RSF and the SAF in Gold Smuggling:

Gold appears to be a major source of the tensions that erupted in the current conflict. During the transitional period, the rapid and aggressive expansion of RSF companies in the gold sector sparked panic within the military, escalating tensions between the former allies. A recently leaked phone call between Mubarak Ardol, the former director of the Sudanese Mineral Resources Company, and a major gold trade broker revealed allegations of bribery involving senior military and security leaders to align with General Kabashi, the deputy commander of the SAF, in sabotaging the Political Framework Agreement under discussion in the weeks leading up to the outbreak of war[5]. If true, this suggests that gold revenues were used to bribe senior military officers, playing a crucial role in the developments that led to the war[6].

The RSF, in particular, has focused on controlling gold resources. In April 2023, during the early days of the conflict, the RSF recaptured Jebel Aamer, a major gold-producing area in Darfur. On May 24, 2023, the RSF seized the Sudanese gold refinery in Khartoum, confiscating an estimated 1.3 tons of unrefined gold, worth approximately $150 million, along with 15 tons of silver ready for export, as stated by the Minister of Minerals, Mohamed Bashir Abu Namo. Since then, the RSF has taken control of several other gold-producing areas across Darfur.

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[5] https://www.facebook.com/Mujo84/videos/1028409712241110

[6] https://www.facebook.com/Mujo84/videos/448101747851490

How RSF Uses Gold (December 2023 - January 2024):

As previously mentioned, control of gold-producing sites is a primary focus of the RSF. Consequently, it controls at least half a dozen mining sites in Sudan, including Jebel Amir, which it previously surrendered to the transitional government[7] in exchange for a controversial compensation package of over $200 million. The RSF has prioritized the acquisition of refined gold, seizing the Sudanese gold refinery in Khartoum and systematically looting jewelry stores and gold markets in Khartoum, the Libya Market in Omdurman, and Wad Madani. RSF fighters have also systematically looted gold jewelry from private homes, where gold is traditionally stored as a primary means of protecting family wealth.

RSF fighters embrace a culture that views gold and other valuables, looted from private homes, as their rightful spoils of victory. Meanwhile, the RSF leadership, which has not paid soldiers' salaries since the conflict began, does little to prevent its soldiers from looting both private and public property. This practice has become a major incentive for new RSF recruits, yet it undermines the legitimacy of the RSF's political demands for better governance. Testimonies indicate that individual RSF units in artisanal mining areas, such as Jebel Aamir and Hashaba in North Darfur, are also engaged in mining for their own benefit. In many instances, these forces prey on local miners, forcing them to pay protection money. Traditional miners in the Songo area have repeatedly expressed complaints about these practices.

The RSF has reportedly begun smuggling production inputs from Libya[8]. Gold producers in RSF-controlled regions, such as Darfur and South Kordofan, have turned to exporting large quantities of gold to Chad using motorcycles. Hemeti has familial ties with senior Chadian officials, and this network extends to the Central African Republic and Libya, where he has sought to maintain close relations with Khalifa Haftar, who controls eastern Libya. Consequently, the gold produced in the RSF' areas is not included in the annual production and export figures announced by the Ministry of Minerals.

How SAF Use Gold?

SAF and the interim government in Port Sudan continue to intensify the exploitation of gold resources in the areas under their control, specifically in the Northern, Red Sea, and River Nile states, as a primary strategy to address worsening financial challenges. Since the outbreak of armed conflict, the government has prioritized increasing gold production and exports[9] to bridge the financial deficit and fund ongoing military operations.

[7] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YScKvGj1T2o&t=6s

[8] https://adf-magazine.com/ar/2024/02/%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a3%d9%85%d9%85-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%aa%d8%ad%d8%af%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b0%d9%87%d8%a8-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d9%87%d8%b1%d8%a8-%d9%8a%d8%a4%d8%ac%d8%ac-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ad%d8%b1%d8%a8/

[9] https://www.ajnet.me/ebusiness/2025/1/9/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B0%D9%87%D8%A8-%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%B1

According to official statements made by the Director General of the Sudanese Mineral Resources Company, Mohamed Tahir Omar, in April 2024, the company achieved a significant increase in export volume[10], with a total value expected to reach $2.182 billion by the end of the current year. Engineer Ayman Ali Hamed, Director of Supervision and Control of Export Companies, noted that the company successfully exported 7,626 tons during the first quarter of 2024, which he described as a "qualitative leap" in the export sector's performance.

SAF utilize gold revenues for two parallel purposes: the first is military, which includes purchasing weapons, ammunition, military equipment, and financing the salaries of troops and contractors; the second is diplomatic-economic, aimed at buying loyalty and securing regional and international support. Security reports have revealed that the army has established a complex network of civilian front companies that export gold to multiple international markets, particularly Dubai and the Far East, while transferring revenues through alternative banking channels that circumvent international sanctions.

It is important to note that the mining practices employed by the armed forces are divided between traditional mining in some areas and industrial mining in others, in partnership with Russian and Chinese companies. This approach allows for the intensive exploitation of gold resources while evading local and international oversight, resulting in significant environmental and health impacts on local communities[11].

M.H.A.H., a trader in Juba, stated that large quantities of gold looted from Sudan reached South Sudan during the initial months of the war. Sources of this gold included citizens' homes and shops in Khartoum and surrounding states, as well as smuggled gold from RSF fighters. He noted that this trade later declined when southern and Somali businessmen took control, purchasing gold at border points and marketing it in Dubai. Additional gold comes from Liri and Songo mines in South Kordofan and is exchanged for food supplies sent unchecked to Darfur.

M.N.M.H., a former Al-Juneid worker, who fled to Uganda with his family after the outbreak of the war. Upon returning to Songo mine, he engaged in artisanal mining. Despite low production levels, gold extraction has not ceased. Gold is sold locally or smuggled through South Sudan and Chad to Dubai, with some sold in markets in both countries. He mentioned that the RSF impose fees on gold traders in Songo.

[10] https://www.alrakoba.net/32010782/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86-1-5-%D9%85%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%AD%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%84-%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B0/

[11] https://www.aljazeera.net/ebusiness/2022/7/18/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%82%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%8A-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%B4%D9%88%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AA

Companies Working with SAF and RSF:

A significant number of companies are collaborating with the SAF and the RSF in gold-related operations, including production and export to countries outside Sudan. These companies represent a primary source of income for both parties. They span gold production sites, traditional mines, and organized mining areas, playing a crucial role in financing the ongoing war in Sudan.

Companies Affiliated with SAF:

1. **Master Technology Company:** Engaged in manufacturing equipment and machinery, this company owns stakes in several firms involved in military manufacturing and mining. It has been placed under US sanctions for its role in financing the conflict.
2. **Giad Mining Company:** Part of Giad Industrial Group in Sudan, it specializes in advanced mining of various mineral ores as part of a comprehensive vision for industrial development in Sudan and Africa. It undertakes advanced mining operations, including high-quality Kurdish marble, *kar* ore, concentrate, iron ore, gypsum ore, and marble ore.
3. **Zadna International Investment Company Limited:** Established in the mid-1990s[12], this Sudanese company is controlled by military leaders, with its directors appointed and dismissed by the Commander-in-Chief of the SAF[13]. It has a project called "Gold City," signed with the River Nile State government[14]to produce gold from the state. It serves as the operational arm in the strategic mining sector and signed a memorandum of understanding with the Sudanese Mineral Resources Company Limited in 2023[15]. This company plays a major role in the Sudanese mining sector, with its revenues used to fund the Sudanese army, drawing international criticism, particularly after the US and European Union imposed sanctions on it[16].
4. **Defense Mining Company:** A subsidiary of Sudan's defense industries system, this company is the primary economic arm of the SAF. It operates in the extraction of gold and strategic minerals and is involved in various mineral extraction operations. It is part of a network of companies used to finance military activities and provide logistical support to the army. In 2024, it was sanctioned by the European Union for undermining stability and political transition in Sudan.
5. Kush Exploration and Production Company: In 2013, under the gold exploration concession agreement, the company continued geological exploration activities in

[12] http://zadna-int.com/

[13] https://alwatannewssd.com/40157/

[14] https://tasamuhnews.com/%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A9-%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%86%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%B0-%D8%AE%D8%B7%D9%88%D8%A9-%D9%85%D9%87%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A8%D8%B4%D8%A3%D9%86-%D8%A5%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%AC-%D8%A7%D9%84/

[15] https://alyoumaltali.net/?p=41756

[16] https://opensudan.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/change.pdf

Block 30, located in Haya Locality of the Red Sea State. It owns 68% of Alliance for Mining, while Sudamin Limited holds 25%. Sudamin Limited, established in 2012, is a Sudanese government company that acts as the service and commercial arm of the Ministry of Minerals. The remaining 7% of shares is owned by Exxon Advanced Projects Limited.

6. Defense Industries Corporation: Formerly known as the Military Industrialization Corporation, this is the largest defense and economic institution affiliated with the Sudanese military. Established in 1993 by presidential decree, it has expanded to encompass hundreds of companies across various sectors, including mining, agriculture, manufacturing, and energy. It operates without civilian oversight. The United States and the European Union have imposed sanctions on the corporation due to its role in financing internal conflicts and its lack of civilian accountability. The corporation is accused of using a complex network of companies to hide its ownership and facilitate access to financing from the Sudanese banking system[17].
7. Ariab Mining Company: As one of the oldest and largest companies operating in Sudan, Ariab Mining Company manages extensive mines in the Ariab area of the Red Sea State and the River Nile State. It was initially established as a partnership between the Sudanese government and foreign entities but later became fully owned by the government. The latest data indicates that Ariab Mining Company is 100% owned by the Industrial Development Bank, which is 75% owned by the Ministry of Finance and 25% by the Central Bank of Sudan, thus categorizing it as a fully government-owned entity[18].

RSF Affiliated Companies:

1. Al-Juneid Company: This holding company is owned by Abdel Rahim Dagalo, the deputy commander of the RSF, and his two sons, Adel Abdel Rahim Hamdan Dagalo Musa and Alaa Eldin Abdel Rahim Hamdan Dagalo Musa. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti), the commander of the RSF, also serves on the company's board of directors. The company has been sanctioned by the European Union, Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Monaco, and Switzerland. Its primary mining area is located in Songo, Darfur, and has remained "fully operational" since the conflict erupted in April 2023. Despite the sanctions imposed on Hemedti, his brother Abdel Rahim Dagalo, and the company itself, Abdel Rahim Dagalo's sons and a subsidiary, Al Junaid Mining Waste Processing Company, were not sanctioned. This subsidiary received shipments of sodium cyanide—a key mining chemical—after the outbreak of the conflict, establishing it as a crucial link in the gold supply chain and financing network associated with the RSF[19].
2. GSK Advance Company LTD and Avia Trade LLC: These companies, operated by influential members of the Sudanese security forces, function in the UAE to finance and procure military equipment, using "*Traduf*" as a channel for purchasing equipment and vehicles for the RSF. The United States, the European Union, and the United Kingdom have imposed sanctions on *Traduf*, accusing it of supporting activities that undermine

[17] https://opensudan.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/change.pdf
[18] https://c4ads.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/BullionForBullets-FinalLayout.pdf
[19] https://c4ads.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/BullionForBullets-FinalLayout.pdf

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stability and the political transition in Sudan. These sanctions include an asset freeze and a ban on providing funds or economic resources, directly or indirectly, to the company. Although not directly linked to mining, *Traduf* serves as a front for acquiring vehicles and equipment for the RSF, including those used in armed conflict. These operations are partially funded by gold revenues controlled by the RSF.
GSK is a Sudanese-based information technology and security company, 60% owned by Major Alqouni Hamdan Dagalo, the younger brother of Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti). GSK is part of the RSF' commercial network, generating stable revenues that enable it to finance and sustain the conflict in Sudan. The RSF uses GSK as a front company to facilitate its cash flow and participate in its procurement operations. Since at least 2019, GSK has been collaborating with Aviatrade LLC[20], a Russian military supply company, to procure and supply materials and equipment for the RSF, including training, unmanned aerial drones, surveillance equipment, and spare parts. The RSF employs reconnaissance aircraft and armed drones in the conflict in Sudan. Consequently, GSK Advance Company LTD supports RSF operations that threaten peace, stability, and security in the country[21].

3. Al Fakher Advanced Business Company Ltd. is chaired by businessman Mahmoud Mohamed Mahmoud, a venture capitalist active in sports and social affairs in northern Sudan[22]. The company operates in artisanal mining, gold exports, and the provision of strategic commodities such as wheat and gas. It has proposed initiatives to the Sudanese Ministry of Finance aimed at reducing gold smuggling and using export proceeds to bolster the national economy[23]. The company entered the mining sector in 2017, operating in several areas, including Abu Hamad, Al-Bishara, and the Red Sea. It was included in the United States sanctions program targeting UAE-based companies, which the US Treasury Department stated helped the RSF generate millions of dollars through gold exports, enabling them to purchase weapons[24].

Other companies operating in mining in Sudan

Local and international companies participate in the gold mining sector in Sudan. These companies range from large-scale enterprises to small and medium-sized businesses. These companies operate in various regions, notably the Red Sea, North Sudan, Darfur, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan. Traditional artisanal mining continues to account for a significant portion of the country's total gold production. The following are some of the most prominent and active companies in this sector:

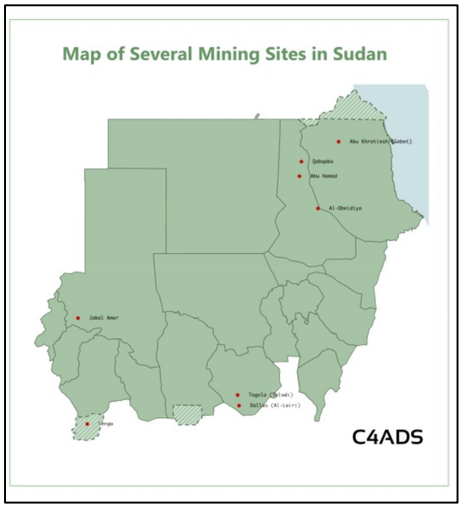
1. Moroccan Mining Company (*Managem*) has been granted gold exploration concessions in Sudan and is a key foreign player in the sector. The latest available ownership data

[20] https://www.opensanctions.org/entities/NK-gBv7vJHdnGLANaZELysEis/
[21] https://www.opensanctions.org/entities/NK-QfFkwcpTeaFHBpwC4e2GeA/
[22] https://www.alnilin.com/13213189.htm
[23] https://www.alnilin.com/13132092.htm
[24] https://sudantribune.net/article281862/

indicates that Manoub Mining Company is 78% owned by the International Mining Company (*Managem*) and 22% by the Sudanese-owned company Sudamin. Managem International Mining Company, controlled by the African Inclusive Investment Fund (Al Mada), is primarily owned by the Moroccan royal family. Following the outbreak of hostilities, Managem reportedly halted production[25].

2. Several Chinese companies are also active in Sudan, including Al Nawati Company and Golden Bridge Company (Sun Jin Boa). These companies recently announced the resumption of their gold mining activities following improved security conditions and are operating with the support and coordination of the Sudanese government.
3. Perseus Mining[26] (ASX, TSX: PRU) is an Australian company that recently acquired all shares in Orca Gold (TSX-V: ORG), a Canadian mining company focused on African mining, through a share swap deal valued at CAD 198 million (US$155.1 million). Perseus previously held a 15% stake in Orca Gold, which is primarily known for its Block 14 gold project in northern Sudan[27], where it owns a 70% stake.
4. In addition to large companies, hundreds of small and medium-sized local and foreign enterprises have received concession approvals from the Sudanese Ministry of Minerals, totaling more than 400, according to official data[28].

About Gold in Sudan:



The gold production sector in Sudan is plagued by widespread smuggling. Official estimates suggest that up to 80 percent of the gold produced is smuggled out of the country. Despite the recent boom in Sudan's mining sector, most of this gold does not enter the state treasury, depriving the Central Bank of a vital source of hard currency[29].

Gold Production in Sudan Until the Outbreak of War:

Sudan's highest gold production occurred in 2017[30], when the value of gold registered with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals exceeded that of smuggled gold. However, production has declined since that peak. In 2023, despite the outbreak of war between the SAF and the RSF,

[25] https://c4ads.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/BullionForBullets-FinalLayout.pdf
[26] https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.mining.com/perseus-mining-becomes-sole-owner-of-orca-gold-in-155m-deal/&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1751539671125619&usg=AOvVaw3hycQrPBOJWSabzG-WTb8N
[27] https://miningdataonline.com/property/3014/Meyas-Sand-Block-14-Project.aspx
[28] https://www.aljazeera.net/blogs/2024/1/4/%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B5%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B0%D9%87%D8%A8-%D9%88-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AF
[29] https://adf-magazine.com/2024/02/smuggled-gold-fuels-war-in-sudan-u-n-says/
[30] https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=825879620931647&id=139111706275112&set=a.155534387966177

production rates increased compared to 2022. This rise may be attributed to improved regulation of gold production and export, heightened activity in domestic stock exchanges, or relative stability amid conflict. Nevertheless, as the war escalated, production declined significantly, directly linked to informal smuggling practices that facilitate the financing of ongoing conflicts.

Yearly	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Production (in tons)	82	93.4	107.3	93.6	90	90	50	50	66.5	51

The table presents gold production rates based on Central Bank data for the years 2015-2024.

Since losing three-quarters of its oil revenues due to South Sudan's secession in July 2011, Sudan has increasingly relied on gold as a primary source of foreign exchange. There is significant inconsistency in production and export figures reported by the Central Bank of Sudan, the Ministry of Minerals, the Geological Research Corporation, and the Sudanese Minerals Company. For instance, during a press conference[31] in January 2017, the Minister of Minerals, Professor Hashim Ali Salem, stated that production had reached 74.6 tons, while the Director General of the Sudanese Mineral Resources Company, Engineer Mujahid Bilal Taha[32], claimed it was 107.3 tons. In 2018, Engineer Mohamed Abu Fatima, Director of the Geological Research Corporation affiliated with the Ministry of Minerals, reported that Sudan produced 93 tons of gold. Meanwhile, the Central Bank of Sudan indicated in its bulletin that gold exports amounted to 20,176 kilograms for that year[33]. This disparity highlights a significant transparency issue regarding which entities should be considered reliable: The Ministry of Minerals or the Sudanese Mineral Resources Company?

The discrepancies have become even more pronounced in the three years since the outbreak of war on April 15, 2023. According to the Minister of Minerals[34], gold production in 2023 totaled 23.2 tons. He noted that due to the war, Sudan lost more than 35 companies in the tailings sector, approximately 130 concession companies were suspended at the exploration phase, and 19 concession companies were halted from production. The minister also stated that the ministry managed to resume production for about five concession companies and accused the RSF of seizing 1,273 kilograms of gold from the Sudan Gold Refinery[35]. However, the Central Bank of Sudan has not issued its export summary bulletin.

In the year following the war, 2024, the Central Bank of Sudan reported that gold exports reached 22,928 kilograms. Finance Minister Dr. Gibril Ibrahim[36] told Reuters that Sudan

[31] https://www.facebook.com/SudanNewsAgency/posts/607138326139112

[32] https://www.facebook.com/SudanNewsAgency/posts/607138326139112

[33] https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=825879620931647&id=139111706275112&set=a.155534387966177

[34] https://sudan-voice.com/?p=50898

[35] https://sudantribune.net/article282466/

[36] https://cbos.gov.sd/sites/default/files/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%88%D8%AC%D8%B2%20%D8%A7%D9%84

produced 64 tons of gold in 2024, with only 31 tons officially exported. The discrepancy between the Ministry of Finance's figures and the Central Bank's data[37] indicates that production has lost more than half of its capacity due to the ongoing conflict between the two sides. This confirms that gold has become a primary source of income for the warring parties, with revenues being diverted to finance the war.

This apparent discrepancy in Sudanese gold production and export data reveals a deep structural problem that transcends issues of administrative transparency and becomes a central factor in the sustainability of the current armed conflict. The stark differences between the figures reported by official institutions—namely, the Ministry of Minerals, the Sudanese Mineral Resources Company, and the Central Bank of Sudan—suggest the existence of parallel channels for gold trading outside official channels. These channels are exploited by the conflicting parties to finance their military operations. The decline in officially declared production from 93 tons before the war to a meager output in 2024, in contrast to official exports of no more than 31 tons, illustrates the extent of gold resource leakage through informal channels controlled by the warring factions. This gap indicates the emergence of a parallel war economy that relies on gold as a primary source of hard currency.

The seriousness of this situation is evident in three interconnected dimensions: first, the weakening of central state institutions and the deprivation of the public treasury of vital revenues; second, the creation of networks of interests that transcend national borders and are linked to regional markets, thereby giving the conflict an international dimension; and third, the granting of financial independence to the parties in conflict, shielding them from international pressure and economic sanctions, which contributes to prolonging the conflict and deepening the humanitarian tragedy faced by the Sudanese people.

Gold Exports: New Directions

In this section, we will examine the hypothesis that Sudanese gold, due to the April 15 war, has taken unofficial routes out of Sudan. This is facilitated by individuals or private groups affiliated with the RSF, who cross Sudan's western borders and settle abroad through specific ports, which we will review before and after the war.

From South Sudan by Land Crossing to Kampala

A.A.D.[38], a gold trader in Kampala, confirmed that Sudanese gold crosses the border, particularly through the *Regebat* and *Amit* (Abyei) crossings bordering Darfur and Kordofan states. This occurs after paying small financial sums, and sometimes even without. The gold typically comes in its raw, "unrefined" form, having been burned and converted into stones.

%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%B9%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B9%20%D9%A0%D9%A2%D9%A4.pdf

[37] https://cbos.gov.sd/sites/default/files/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%88%D8%AC%D8%B2%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%B9%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B9%20%D9%A0%D9%A2%D9%A4.pdf

[38] Information obtained from a confidential source in Uganda

Most of this gold crosses the border into South Sudan and settles in Kampala, where it is gathered in large quantities and certified by Ugandan authorities before being exported to the United Arab Emirates. When asked why the UAE is the destination, the response was that selling gold there is straightforward and routine, making it the preferred choice for those involved in this trade.

Chad: Sudan's Western Gateway

Data analysis conducted by Swiss Aid indicates that in 2023, Chad's estimated gold exports to the UAE exceeded twice its estimated gold production capacity. This suggests that most of the gold exported to the UAE was not officially registered and was smuggled across the border.[39]According to the Chadian website Rafik Info, Chad exported $1.11 billion worth of gold and agricultural products to the UAE between 2023 and 2024.[40] This represents a significant increase in trade volume between Abu Dhabi and N'Djamena. For example, in 2015, the volume was only $177 million, while in 2016, it reached approximately $245 million, according to the UAE Council for International Investors.[41]As an ally of the UAE in the Sudan conflict, Chad plays a critical role in providing logistical support to the RSF in their war against the Sudanese army. Although Chad has gold mines in the northeast (Kouri mines), these areas are unstable and frequently plagued by conflict and armed groups.

Kenya: A Remote Crossing

Kenya is a gold producer by African standards and serves as a regional transit hub for gold flows bound for the United Arab Emirates (Dubai). The majority of domestic gold production comes from small-scale artisanal mining, which is not recorded by Kenyan state authorities due to its informal nature. A portion of the gold smuggled from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to a lesser extent Ethiopia and Sudan, passes through Kenya before being re-exported. In other words, Kenya functions as a transit hub for gold from neighboring countries. Reported exports amounted to 672 kg in 2023, primarily to South Africa, Switzerland, and the UAE, while the undeclared volume is likely to exceed 2 tons annually, mostly destined for the UAE.[42]

[39] https://www.swissinfo.ch/ara/%d8%aa%d8%ac%d8%a7%d8%b1%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b0%d9%87%d8%a8-%d9%81%d9%8a-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%88%d8%af%d8%a7%d9%86-%d8%aa%d8%b2%d8%af%d9%87%d8%b1-%d9%81%d9%8a-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ad%d8%b1%d8%a8-%d9%88%d8%aa%d9%85%d8%b1%d9%91-%d8%b9%d8%a8%d8%b1-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a5%d9%85%d8%a7%d8%b1%d8%a7%d8%aa/89073572

[40] https://rafiqinfos.net/1-42-%D9%85%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%AD%D8%AC%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%AA/

[41] https://uaeiic.ae/en/news/details/133

[42] https://africangoldreport.org/kenya

Egypt's Gold Exports Continue to Rise

Egypt's exports of gold, jewelry, and precious stones increased in 2022, reaching $1.529 billion, compared to $1.044 billion during the same period in 2021. The UAE accounted for 52.3% of Egypt's total exports of these products, valued at $800 million, up from $370 million, marking a growth of 116%.[43] Export data for 2023 showed a 14% increase compared to 2022, particularly in gold, jewelry, and precious stones.[44]Furthermore, Egypt's exports of gold and precious stones surged by 75% by the end of 2024, reaching $3.26 billion compared to $1.85 billion in 2023. However, only two countries—the UAE and Switzerland—accounted for 99% of total exports. This significant increase in exports raises concerns that some of the gold smuggled from Sudan is entering Cairo through illicit channels and then being exported to global markets. This is particularly plausible given that the border between Sudan and Egypt (northern mines, such as the areas of Al-Ubaidiya and Abu Hamad) remains open, with vehicles smuggling Sudanese passengers fleeing the war crossing daily without interference.[45]

Conclusion

The information gathered in this report supports the fundamental hypothesis of our research: "Sudanese gold is smuggled by various individuals and entities," ultimately ending up in the vaults of neighboring countries or being transported to the UAE, with its proceeds contributing to the continuation of the devastating war.

Sudan's gold has become a curse rather than a gift for its people. The social fabric of these civilians has been destroyed and divided by civil wars, leading to widespread devastation. Despite sanctions imposed on the warring parties and their numerous companies, these restrictions have not been effective. There are always alternative ways to circumvent these limitations through regional and international intermediaries who facilitate this trade.

[43] https://www.youm7.com/story/2023/1/16/1-5-%D9%85%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B0%D9%87%D8%A8-%D9%81%D9%89-11/6050722#:~:text=%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%B9%D8%AA%20%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA%20%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1%20%D9%85%D9%86%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B0%D9%87%D8%A8%20%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%84%D9%89%20%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AD%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%B1,%D9%85%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B1%20%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B1%20%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%84%20%D9%86%D9%81%D8%B3%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A9%20%D9%85%D9%86%202021.

[44] https://market.isagha.com/articles/1007

[45] https://www.sudanakhbar.com/1593341