

A New Covenant (Ahd Jadid)

Sudan's Path to Peace, National Recovery and Renaissance — The Charter and the Executive Summary

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The Charter of the New Covenant

Preamble

We, the undersigned — parties, movements, trade unions, organisations and individuals, from inside Sudan and from its diaspora, and from different intellectual and political backgrounds;

Aware that Sudan is passing through the most dangerous moment in its history since independence; that the war which broke out on 15 April 2023 has killed tens of thousands, displaced millions, destroyed cities and villages, and exposed the failure of the state as it was built since independence;

Convinced that reproducing that state would reproduce the war, and that the way out lies neither in stopping the fighting alone nor in changing rulers alone, but in a new political covenant in which the Sudanese agree on the foundations of their state before they agree on who governs it;

Respecting our intellectual and political differences, believing that what unites us is far greater than what divides us, and that organised disagreement under agreed rules is a source of strength rather than weakness;

We pledge as follows:

I. The Twelve Principles

1. Ending the war. Ending the war is a supreme national priority that comes before every dispute. We work to end it, by military or negotiated means, on terms that preserve the unity of the state and without rewarding crimes, and we reject the use of its continuation for any political purpose.

2. One sovereign Sudan. Sudan is one homeland, in land and people. We reject its partition, the existence of any parallel authority within it, and the presence of any foreign military base on its soil; and we commit to positive neutrality in the conflicts of the region.

3. One national army. Sudan has one national army holding the monopoly of arms: professional, outside politics and the economy, subject to civilian authority. We recognise no armed formation outside it, under any name or pretext.

4. A civil state. The state we want is a civil state that stands at an equal distance from all religions and beliefs, respects them all, and uses none of them as an instrument of discrimination between citizens or of incitement.

5. Equal citizenship. Citizenship is the basis of rights and duties. There is no discrimination between Sudanese on grounds of region, ethnicity, religion, sex, culture or language. We commit that women shall hold at least one third of decision-making positions, and that the young shall have their place in decision-making.

6. Supremacy of the constitution and the rule of law. The constitution is supreme, the law binds the ruler before the ruled, and the judiciary is independent. We commit to integrity and transparency, and we hold corruption to be a crime against the people.

7. Fundamental rights and freedoms. Human rights and freedoms are inviolable and no authority may diminish them: freedom of expression, association, belief and movement, and the security of the person, property and home.

8. Justice and reconciliation. There is no peace without justice. There shall be no amnesty for war crimes, genocide or crimes against humanity, and no collective punishment; instead there shall be fair individual trials, the uncovering of truth, reparation for victims, and community reconciliation that rebuilds civil peace.

9. Decentralised government. The regions are partners in the state, not subordinates of the centre. We commit to decentralised government that grants the regions real powers and a fair share of wealth through a published formula.

10. A productive and just economy. The economy we want rests on production, investment, social justice and knowledge; it frees public money and resources from the grip of the security apparatus and the corrupt; it protects the most vulnerable; and it preserves the right of future generations to the country's wealth.

11. Free elections and the peaceful transfer of power. Power is gained only through free and fair elections, and kept only through them. We reject coups, hold them to be crimes not extinguished by the passage of time, and reject any recourse to arms or to foreign powers.

12. A time-bound transition. The transition shall not exceed thirty-six months, and the target is to hold elections in the thirtieth month. We regard any extension as a constitutional crime, and we commit to handing power to those elected, on time.

II. What We Agree to Differ On

We acknowledge that many questions remain open to national dialogue and democratic competition, among them the permanent system of government, the number of regions in the permanent state, the electoral system, the details of transitional justice, and detailed economic and social policies. Every signatory keeps the right to put forward its own view on these, to defend it peacefully, and to compete on that basis in elections. **In the end we defer to the national dialogue and to the will of the people.**

III. Rules of Political Conduct

We commit, as individuals and as institutions, to:

1. **Not promise what we lack the means to deliver**, and to say plainly when we do not have the answer.
2. **Declare our assets** on taking up any public office and on leaving it, and accept their scrutiny.
3. **Not use public office for personal, family or party gain**, and disclose any conflict of interest.
4. **Accept the results of elections**, whatever they may be, and hand over offices on time.
5. **Not seek strength through arms or foreign powers** in any political dispute.
6. **Not create armed organisations**, nor party cells within the regular forces.
7. **Reject hate speech** — racist, regional or religious — and never justify it.
8. **Practise democracy within our own organisations**, elect our leaders periodically, and publish our budgets.
9. **Publish our achievements and our failures** in public reports, and accept accountability.
10. **Respect the right of others to differ**, and conduct our disagreements by argument rather than by accusations of treason.
11. **Accept no funding from foreign governments or security agencies** for our political work.
12. **Place the interest of Sudan above the interest of party, group and person.**

IV. The Path of Transition to Which We Commit

We call for an orderly civilian transition and commit to working for it, in the following sequence:

1. **The Transitional Constituent Assembly first:** formed by a decision of the Sovereignty Council, after publicly announced consultation, with one hundred members representing the regions and national expertise, at least one third of them women. It is the body that approves the transitional constitution, approves the government and oversees it throughout the transition, and without whose approval no constitutional change may be made.
2. **The National Recovery Government:** civilian, broadly representative, composed of competent individuals, with defined tasks and a defined term; charged with ending the war, relief, reconstruction, the security arrangements, hosting the national dialogue, and preparing the country for free elections.
3. **The Sudanese–Sudanese national dialogue:** run by an independent body, without domestic or foreign tutelage, ending in an inclusive national charter.
4. **The permanent constitution and general elections:** a constitution approved by popular referendum, free elections, and the handover of power to those elected.

We further commit that members of the Constituent Assembly and of the transitional government shall not stand in the first general elections that follow. Those who lead a transition must work for its success, not for winning it.

V. Joining and Commitment

1. **This Charter is open** to all who accept its principles and rules: parties and movements, trade unions and professional associations, civil society organisations, native administrations, and individuals, at home and in the diaspora.
2. **Joining does not erase** the identity, programme or independence of those who join, and does not require agreement with every detail of the “New Covenant” vision.
3. **No entity with an armed wing may join**, nor any person accused or convicted of war crimes, crimes against humanity or corruption.
4. **Signature is in the name of its holder**, and the name is published in the list of signatories only with the signatory’s express consent. The signature counts in full without publication of the name for those living in unsafe circumstances.
5. **Any signatory may withdraw** by written declaration.
6. **This Charter may be reviewed** when needed, by a two-thirds decision of the General Conference of the New Covenant bloc, **without touching the Twelve Principles**.

By signing this Charter we declare that we do not merely agree with a political vision: we commit to new rules for Sudanese political life, and we count ourselves part of a new covenant for our country.

Signature

Name / Organisation:

Capacity (individual / party / movement / union / organisation / other):
.....

Place of residence:

I consent to the publication of my name in the list of signatories: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Signature: **Date:**

Executive Summary

In a Few Words

“A New Covenant” is a vision of one Sudan: civil, democratic, governed by law, whose national army holds the monopoly of arms, in which power and wealth are distributed fairly, citizens are equal, people choose their rulers through elections, and the economy rests on production, investment, knowledge and integration with Africa and the world.

This vision is neither a party programme nor a campaign manifesto. It is a programmatic foundation presented to the Sudanese people for two purposes: to serve as **a reference for the**

transitional period and its leadership, and as a **framework for the candidates who adopt it** in the first elected term. It is also a call to form a **broad national bloc** that goes beyond political parties without replacing them.

It comes in three levels: **the Charter**, a short text for signature and the condition for joining the bloc; **the Vision**, the full book in the author's own voice, offered for dialogue, agreement with all of whose details is not a condition for joining; and **the detailed papers**, accompanying sectoral studies and draft laws, published in sequence.

The vision spans eight years, from 1 January 2027 to the end of 2034: a transition of no more than 36 months, followed by a first elected term of five years.

Why Do We Need a New Covenant?

Sudan has reached a point at which there can be no return to the old rules of the game. The state as it was built has failed, the war has exposed that failure, and reproducing it would reproduce the war. Ending the fighting is therefore not enough: what is needed is a new national agreement on the foundations of the state, before agreeing on who governs it.

- **Previous peace efforts failed** because they were deals between armed actors that treated one aspect of the crisis and left the structure of the state intact.
- **Military victory alone is not enough**, because arms can stop a rebellion but cannot build a just state.
- **A conventional transitional government is not enough**: it was tried after 1964, 1985 and 2019, and it either reproduced the old order or lasted long enough to create interests that defended its survival.
- **Changing individuals is not enough**, because the flaw lies in the design of the state, not in the faces.

Where Do We Stand Today?

Indicator	Value	Source
People in need of humanitarian assistance	33.7 million	UN Humanitarian Response Plan 2026
Internally displaced persons	about 8.9 million, against about 4 million returnees	IOM, March 2026
Refugees in neighbouring countries	more than 4 million	UN agencies
Extreme poverty	about 59% (2025) against 48% (2023)	World Bank
GDP 2025	USD 60.2 billion (current prices)	World Bank, April 2026
Public revenue	4.2% of GDP, about USD 2.5 billion	World Bank
Inflation	111.5% average in 2025	World Bank
Public debt	128.5% of GDP	World Bank

Indicator	Value	Source
Years of military rule since independence	about 57 out of 70	Author's approximate calculation

Sudan's strengths and opportunities are real and considerable — a resilient and self-organised people, vast natural resources, a strategic location, a large diaspora, and international interest in reconstruction — but they are held back by weaknesses of our own making: a multiplicity of arms, collapsed institutions, a devastated economy, excessive centralisation and entrenched corruption. The vision therefore rests on a clear strategy: **to address the internal weaknesses first, because that is what opens the way to seizing the opportunities and reducing the external threats.**

The Twelve Principles

Ending the war; one sovereign Sudan; one national army; a civil state; equal citizenship; the supremacy of the constitution and the rule of law; fundamental rights and freedoms; justice and reconciliation; decentralised government; a productive and just economy; free elections and the peaceful transfer of power; and a transition of no more than 36 months. *(The full text of each principle is in the Charter above.)*

Everything else is open to dialogue: the system of government, the number of regions, the electoral system, the details of transitional justice, and economic policy. The author states his view on each clearly, but none of them is a condition for joining; they are to be decided by the national dialogue and then by the people.

The Road: Phases of the Transition

Phase	Content	Period
Zero	A decision by the current Sovereignty Council to form the Transitional Constituent Assembly (100 members)	October – December 2026
One	The Assembly approves the transitional constitution , then approves the National Recovery Government and its programme	January – March 2027
Two	The Sudanese–Sudanese national dialogue , ending with a national charter	Months 3–15
Three	Ending the war , by military or negotiated means, and a comprehensive ceasefire	From month 1; target before month 18
Four	Security arrangements: unifying arms, integration and demobilisation,	Months 6–36

Phase	Content	Period
	restructuring the army	
Five	Reconstruction and return	From month 6 onwards
Six	Census, referendum on the permanent constitution, and the first general elections	Months 9–36
First elected term	Completing reconstruction, economic transformation, consolidating federal government, then the second elections	2030–2034

Guarantees against extension: a constitutional provision setting the maximum length of the transition which may not be amended; criminalisation of any attempt to extend it; a protected budget for the electoral commission from the first month; and a monthly public progress dashboard. **Members of the Constituent Assembly and of the transitional government shall not stand in the first elections.**

Institutions of the Transitional Period

- **The Transitional Constituent Assembly:** the first institution of the transition and a precondition for forming the government. One hundred members — **ten from each of the nine regions** and ten independent experts — with at least one third of seats held by women. It approves the transitional constitution, approves and oversees the government, no constitutional change may be made without its approval by a two-thirds majority, and it has no power to extend the transition.
- **A three-member Sovereignty Council** with ceremonial and oversight functions.
- **The National Recovery Government:** a lean civilian government of competent people, of no more than sixteen ministries, with limited and published tasks.
- **The National Security and Defence Council:** a constitutional body meeting regularly during the transition, becoming a National Security Council chaired by the elected president in the permanent state, with military members holding a non-voting advisory status.
- **Seven independent national commissions:** census and elections, human rights, transitional justice, civil service reform, land, reconstruction, and humanitarian aid; alongside a commission for the permanent constitution.
- **The Central Anti-Corruption Office:** fully independent of the government, with a protected leadership and budget, and a modern law.
- **A Ministry of Institutional Reform** reporting directly to the Prime Minister.
- **Building state capacity in the first months** through six entry points: starting with the institutions that survived, small and strong delivery units, bringing expertise back from the diaspora, technical assistance conditional on knowledge transfer, digitalisation, and temporary partnership with civil society in service delivery.

The State: Transitional and Permanent

- **Nine regions during the transition** instead of 18 states: Northern; Eastern; Khartoum; Greater Gezira; Sennar; North Kordofan; South Kordofan; North Darfur; South Darfur. A draft Transitional Regional Government Law sets out their boundaries, powers, and a published formula for fiscal transfers weighted by population (50%), need (25%) and war damage (25%).
- **For the permanent state the author proposes six regions** — Northern, Eastern, Central, Kordofan, Darfur and Khartoum — to be settled by the national dialogue and the referendum.
- **A federal presidential republic** with safeguards: the president needs a majority of the vote and at least a quarter of it in most regions; a maximum of two presidential terms; a bicameral parliament; an independent constitutional court; and an exclusively federal army.
- **No right of secession:** the regions' guarantee lies in their broad powers and fair resource sharing, not in the option of disintegration.

Security and Defence

- **One army** that integrates all forces which fought alongside the state **as individuals, not as units**, and the dissolution of ideological and partisan formations.
- **Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration:** registering 100,000 combatants and integrating or demobilising 50,000 within 18 months, and 160,000 by the end of month 48.
- **A smaller, more modern force:** 300,000 by 2034, of whom 180,000 in the regular army and 120,000 in a National Guard whose size and safeguards are fixed by law and which has no command structure independent of the armed forces.
- **A double defence ceiling:** no more than 3% of GDP and 15% of public spending in peacetime, and no more than 5% of GDP and 25% of public spending during a declared war.
- **The army's exit from the economy** within five years, and from the cities.
- **Constitutional civilian oversight:** a civilian minister of defence, the criminalisation of coups, and a parliamentary national security committee.

War, Peace and Justice

The Sudanese war is three intertwined wars: a struggle over arms within the state, a crisis in the way the state was built, and a proxy war. The remedy is a new social contract linking each cause to a remedy: federalism for marginalisation, rotation of power for monopoly, a national land law, and transitional justice for impunity.

Transitional justice rests on seven elements, with institutional protection for each function: a truth and reconciliation commission; a specialised prosecution for evidence; an independent witness protection programme; hybrid courts with Sudanese and international judges; a reparations fund; community reconciliation limited to local disputes; and cooperation with international mechanisms. **There is no amnesty for grave crimes.**

Return shall be voluntary, safe and dignified, with a package for every returning household and the full right of the displaced and refugees to vote.

The Economy

- **The goal:** to raise gross domestic product to about three times its level by 2034, from 60 to about 180–190 billion dollars. This is **an ambitious goal**, requiring growth close to 15% a year, and the budget is therefore built on a moderate scenario (about 101 billion dollars in 2034). **Even that moderate scenario only returns the economy to its pre-war size around 2034**, since output in 2025 is about 63% of its 2022 level in real terms. Ambition here is a necessity, not a luxury.
- **Three phases:** stabilisation (months 1–18), take-off (19–48), transformation (49–96).
- **Who is affected and who gains:** companies owned by the security apparatus, smuggling networks, monopolists and those who profited from multiple exchange rates lose their privileges; small producers, law-abiding businesspeople, public employees, the regions and the poor gain.
- **Public revenue** rises from about 4% of GDP to 15%, with the sources of that increase set out source by source.
- **Gold** returns to official channels through a full chain from licensing to refining and transparency; agriculture drives the recovery; electricity output is tripled, mostly from clean sources; a sovereign fund preserves the share of future generations; and no resource may be pledged before it is extracted.

People

- **Education:** “no lost generation”, bringing every out-of-school child back, teachers before curricula, and a national fund for education and against unemployment.
- **Health:** an urgent programme against famine and epidemics, a health facility within reach of every citizen, and mental health as a priority.
- **Social protection** in three layers: universal basic services; targeted cash transfers to the poorest fifth of households through digital identity, with a field registration track so that no one is excluded for lack of documents; and **a rigorous pilot of a guaranteed basic income** (50 dollars a month for every adult) for 10,000 households over two years, with an independent evaluation before any decision to expand. Universal application of that income would cost about 15 billion dollars a year, roughly a quarter of 2025 GDP, and is not financially possible in the foreseeable future.
- **Women and youth:** at least one third of decision-making positions for women, and an integrated programme for the war generation.
- **Media:** free and independent, a public-service broadcaster, and countering disinformation with information rather than censorship.

Sudan and the World

Sudan is an African and Arab state with a strategic location, and not an arena of influence for anyone. Its foreign policy is **smart neutrality**: relations with all without alignment with axes; **no foreign military bases of any country**; work with the Red Sea states to make it a space of cooperation; and active engagement in the African Union and continental integration.

Relations with all states, including those that intervened in the war, rest on respect for sovereignty and an end to interference, while keeping the door open to repairing relations.

Cost and Financing

Over a fiscal horizon of about ten years, the investment and emergency programmes are estimated at 100 to 171 billion dollars, the security and defence system at 43.5 to 59 billion, and the expected sources at 84 to 171 billion. **These are upper estimates that require a detailed costing matrix**, and they represent total investment cost rather than a commitment on the Sudanese budget.

The financing matrix is explicit: there is today no confirmed funding outside humanitarian aid. Grants, concessional finance, the reconstruction fund, private investment and debt relief are all **conditional on peace and civilian rule**. Peace is therefore the governing condition for freeing resources.

The Key Assumptions

The vision rests on assumptions no government can guarantee alone, stated openly with their alternatives: the current Sovereignty Council's acceptance of forming the Constituent Assembly; ending the war before month 18; the cooperation of the military institution with reform; a minimum consensus among political forces; the availability of external financing; the return of gold to official channels; a large-scale return of the displaced; the feasibility of a census; and relative stability in the neighbourhood. **The failure of one assumption does not bring the vision down; it changes its course or lengthens its timeline. The constants do not change.**

The Call

We do not ask you to agree with us on everything. We ask you to agree that Sudan deserves a new covenant, and to be part of making it.

- **If you are a party or movement:** join the Charter, and keep your programme and identity.
- **If you are a trade union or civil society organisation:** sign, and take part in the sectoral papers.
- **If you are a public figure, an academic or a businessperson:** sign, and contribute your expertise.
- **If you are young, displaced, a refugee or in the diaspora:** this is your vision before it is anyone else's.

Documents and signature: ahdjadid.org · **Contact:** ahd@ahdjadid.org

About the author: Adil Abdelaati is a Sudanese politician and writer, founder of the Sudanese Liberal Party in 2003, and Deputy Secretary-General of the African Democratic Alliance for Freedom and Progress. This vision is not a programme for his personal candidacy for the presidency: the position in which he believes he can best serve his country now is helping to bring a civilian government into being during the transition, through national consensus and

popular pressure. He accepts the restriction the vision proposes for all: **members of the transitional authority shall not stand in the first elections.**