

# **MEDIA MONITORING OF REFERENDUM in SUDAN**

---

*MEDIA COVERAGE: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS*

PERIOD 16 DECEMBER 2010 – 15 JANUARY 2011



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>FOREWORD</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>II. MEDIA AND 2011 REFERENDUM</b>	<b>4</b>
A. SUDAN MEDIA SECTOR: AN OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN ISSUES AND CHALLENGES	4
B. MEDIA BACKGROUND TO 2011 REFERENDUM	5
<b>II. MONITORING MEDIA COVERAGE OF REFERENDUM: MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>8</b>
1. GENERAL MEDIA OFFER	9
2. REFERENDUM COVERAGE ON TELEVISION AND RADIO	12
3. REFERENDUM COVERAGE IN THE PRINT MEDIA	16
4. THE REFERENDUM MORATORIUM AND VOTING DAYS PERIODS	20
<b>ANNEX I – LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>	<b>21</b>

## Foreword

---

The Sudan Media and Elections Consortium (SMEC) was established in January 2010 to implement a project on media and elections in Sudan. Following the successful completion and reporting on the Media coverage of the April 2010 elections, the SMEC was once more contracted to undertake a number of media related activities in relation to the Southern Sudan Referendum of January 2011. Monitoring media coverage of politics and referendum is one of the two components of the project in parallel with training and mentoring programme for the journalists and media houses.

This report contains the main findings concerning media coverage of the referendum campaign, of the silence period as well as of the voting days. This is the second report to be produced on media monitoring activities conducted by SMEC<sup>1</sup>. Monthly reports will be published in February and March with a final report in April 2011.

Starting from mid-December 2010, the SMEC has been carrying out a targeted monitoring focusing on referendum coverage, agenda setting, offensive speech related to referendum as well as media developments during and after the campaign period. The methodology includes both quantitative and qualitative tools for media analysis. The monitoring takes place in two joint media monitoring units, one in Khartoum and one in Juba. The SMEC observes three TV stations during prime time, six radio channels during peak times and fifteen newspapers on a daily basis<sup>2</sup>. The media included in the sample have been selected according to a number of criteria, including territorial reach, estimated audience and circulation.

All selected media are monitored according to a standard methodology of content analysis used in a number of elections since 1997. International organisations and civic society groups adopted and tested it in a number of countries. The methodology aimed at assessing:

- whether the options Unity and Secession were professionally, fairly and impartially covered;
- whether the two advocating fronts of the Referendum were equitably and fairly covered;
- whether the Referendum was covered in a neutral or partial manner;
- whether political actors received equitable and balanced coverage by the observed media outlets both in terms of space/time and tone;
- whether the agenda of the media fairly reflected issues and themes relevant to Referendum.

The information collected through quantitative and qualitative monitoring and the observation of media developments included:

- The coverage and geographical distribution of Referendum news.
- The volume of Referendum related news vis-à-vis other type of news coverage.
- The sources (actors: male, female, representatives of religion and tribes, parties, referendum administration) involved in the communication concerning the Referendum.
- The access to the media for different parties and advocacy fronts.
- The balance in the coverage for the two Referendum options.
- The type of language used to cover the Referendum and issues of public interest.
- Freedom of the press and media landscape.
- Legal framework for media coverage of Referendum and legal developments.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Media Monitoring Inception Report prepared by SMEC was issued on 31 December 2010

<sup>2</sup> The sample included:

a. Khartoum Unit

Press: Ajas Alhurria, Akir Lahza, Alyaam, Eltayer, Al-Sudani, Akbar Alyoum, Al-Sahafa, Al-Rai Alaam and Al-Intibaha

Audiovisual: Omdurman Radio, Peace Radio, Sudan TV and Blue Nile TV

b. Juba Unit

Press: The Citizen, Sudan Tribune, Sudan Vision, Khartoum Monitor, The Democrat and Juba Post

Audiovisual: South Sudan Radio (SSR), Miraya Radio, Bakhita Radio, Voice of People Radio (VoP) and South Sudan TV (SSTV).

## Executive Summary

---

On 9 January 2011 Southern Sudan held a referendum to establish whether Southern Sudan should remain united with the North or rather a new independent state should be created. This referendum represented a crucial moment in the democratic development of the country whereby Southern Sudanese citizens were called to express their will on the future of their region. In this context, election authorities, political parties, civil society, advocacy groups as well as national media played a key role in informing voters on the alternative options available and ensuring a peaceful and conducive environment for a genuinely free choice.

The legal frame for referendum coverage - as defined by the Southern Sudan Referendum Act (SSRA) and its implementing rules and regulations – aimed at creating a level playing-field between the opposing fronts for Unity and Secession so to enable voters to make an informed decision. It established a system of free advertising on state-owned media for advocates of both options and the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) organised a round of referendum debates. Nevertheless, a number of factors hampered full implementation of this frame including its late adoption, the unclear rules for the allocation of free airtime and space and the deficient communication of the rules to the relevant stakeholders, namely parties and advocacy groups. The SSRA also established a plan for voter education and information that was successfully planned and implemented by the relevant authorities. All media houses acknowledged the transparency, openness and approachability of the SSRC, the Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau (SSRB) and polling staff.

Although media coverage for referendum was extensive, most of the media houses did not have a consistent and coordinated reporting plan. Professional standards for coverage were often flawed as there was a general absence of perspective on how to follow up news and political developments. The main challenges hampering referendum coverage concerned the lack of technical equipment, logistical and organisational problems, insufficient reporting skills and the unwillingness of people to openly discuss the subject of referendum for fear of being perceived as partisans for the one of the minority fronts in the two regions – Secession in the North and Unity in the South.

No widespread episodes of harassment were reported during the referendum campaign period, although in the North a few cases of undue detentions and closures raised concerns in relation to freedom of the press and their ability to freely cover referendum related issues.

During the three weeks prior to voting days the media ensured regular and intensive coverage of referendum in a variety of formats, although quantitative differences between Southern and Northern media were observed: English-language outlets devoted to referendum nearly the totality for their reporting, while the subject was covered in a more limited manner in the Arabic-speaking media.

In both Northern and Southern media markets, the access provided to the two opposing fronts for Unity and Secession was uneven: one-sided reporting prevailed in all outlets and the presence of alternative views and opinions was generally limited. As a matter of fact, the editorial lines of each media house showed a clear polarisation based on their respective geographical target audiences. Television and radio stations targeting Arabic-speaking audiences tended to give the Unity front – both parties and advocacy groups - the largest exposure. Conversely the media addressing the South allotted nearly all their coverage to the Secession front with the result that no Unity campaign or discussions on the consequences of both options received any visibility. The press showed a more plural vocation by covering the Unity and Secession advocates with greater balance than audiovisual media; however, newspapers in the North often covered the Separation front in a negative way, while Southern press did the same for the Unity front.

Explicit episodes of journalistic bias for one of the two referendum fronts were sporadic; however, a number of cases of “embedded partiality” were observed. Many media houses – particularly the press - tended to mix news and opinions when presenting one of the two referendum options; in addition the choice of several



experts hosted in television and radio programmes revealed the tendency to ensure visibility to only one side of the referendum front. The kind of questions journalists asked often indicated the propensity to shape the answer towards a given direction, in the North in favour of Unity and in the South in favour of Secession.

The media generally acted as agents of pacification during the referendum by addressing constant messages against violence and for a peaceful voting period and no systematic episodes of offensive language were observed in the mainstream media.

During the referendum silence period beginning on 8 January and continuing over the seven days voting phase, most media did not respect the provisions prohibiting the coverage of referendum campaign activities and advocacy messages.

-----

This report is a part of the Strengthening of Media component 'Support to Southern Sudan Referendum Project (SSRP)', funded by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and implemented by the Sudan Media and Elections Consortium, a group of national and international organisations with expertise in media support. These are Sudanese Development Initiative (SUDIA), International Media Support (IMS), Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA), Osservatorio di Pavia, Arab Working Group for media monitoring and Fojo media institute.

*For more information, contact Ms. Brigitte Sins, Project Manager, Tel. + 249 9072 06812 or + 45 8832 7005, email: [bs@j-m-s.dk](mailto:bs@j-m-s.dk) or [britsins@hotmail.com](mailto:britsins@hotmail.com).*

## I. Legal Frame for Referendum Coverage

---

The legal reference for the organisation and management of Referendum is the SSRA that includes a number of articles providing broad instructions for the media during the campaign period. The SSRA guarantees freedom of expression in the media under article 45.3. Article 45.4 of the SSRA Act provides for a Referendum media programme to inform voters on referendum procedures. According to Article 45.2 and 47.1, the South Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) and the Government shall provide and guarantee equal opportunities and just treatment in the State-owned media for both the options available to voters, related to the referendum. The SSRA also provides that the campaign stops 24 hours before the vote and no advocacy activities shall take place over the voting days.

While the campaign period officially commenced on November 7, Media Campaign Rules and Regulations (MCRR) were passed by the SSRC only at the beginning of December. The MCRR established a Media Committee supervising media during the referendum and provided with a broad jurisdiction that includes: organising voter education, monitoring media balance and accuracy, dealing with complaints against media unfairness, organising referendum debates as well as ensuring compliance with the election moratorium period starting on 8 January and lasting the whole 7 days voting period. The MCRR intended to establish a frame to ensure equal opportunities for both referendum fronts and to enable a comprehensive campaign for voter education. However, some provisions are not clearly formulated leaving potential room for misinterpretations and undue interference in the editorial freedom of private media. In addition, a number of factors hampered adequate implementation of the MCRR including their late adoption, the unclear rules for the allocation of free advertising and the deficient communication of the rules to the relevant stakeholders, namely parties and advocacy groups. The main parties did not register to obtain free airtime and this benefit was not fully exploited by advocacy groups; no official list of registered advocacy groups was publicly available, leaving the media unaware of the system and the rules in place for free access. In addition, no investigation, adjudication and enforcement mechanism was available to address media-related complaints and appeals.

Following the mandate established in the Southern Sudan Referendum Act and the MCRR, the SSRC organised a round-up of referendum debates between 29 December and 6 January to be held both in Khartoum and Juba. Out of the five planned debates, only two of them took place, one in Khartoum and the other in Juba due to organisational problems and the inability to participate of some of the guests invited.

No media house adopted internal guidelines for referendum coverage with the exception of Miraya Radio that introduced a detailed Charter of professional standards.

## II. Media and 2011 Referendum

---

### a. Sudan Media Sector: an overview of the main issues and challenges

The Sudanese media landscape is characterised by a fair number of media houses. In the North the entire audiovisual sector – both radio and television – is state-controlled and has a *de facto* monopoly of news production, while in the South diversity of ownership exists for radio stations and print media. Radio stations are regarded as the main information channels for Sudanese citizens, being the medium with the widest accessibility. In both regions the press plays a minor role due to high illiteracy rates as well as problems in the distribution system within rural areas.

In the North, the media operate in a political environment strictly limiting freedom of expression<sup>3</sup>. Despite the fact that the national Press Law guarantees access to information for journalists, their freedom is constrained in practice by the authorities. In North Sudan journalists are reported to be subject to personal attacks such as

---

<sup>3</sup> See SMEC Final Report, November 2010.

expulsions, detention, beatings and the confiscation of work equipment. Legal actions against journalists and the media include law suits, fines and imprisonment. Although Pre-publication (PP) censorship was formally lifted in 2010, pre-censorship is still somehow practiced on a more reduced scale and more discreetly.

The media sector in the South is relatively young, as it started developing only after the CPA in 2005. Many media houses grew quickly but most of them have not managed yet to achieve full sustainability. During 2010, a few new media houses were established or re-established including the newspapers The Democrat and the Sudan Tribune. After April 2010 elections, new audiovisual media were created too, such as Ebony TV and Voice of the People Radio, and the newspaper Pioneer. On 5 January 2011, the first edition of the Juba-printed version of the Citizen was released<sup>4</sup> and on 3 January 2011 the first issue of the new newspaper The Independent was published. Although the media based in Southern Sudan do not experience the PP censorship in the same way as in the North, they do not entirely feel free to express their views or cover certain issues for fear of interventions on behalf of the security forces.

## **b. Media Background to 2011 Referendum**

### *1. Northern Media and Referendum Coverage<sup>5</sup>*

The news agenda for Northern media was more diverse than in the South and other issues – the Darfur peace talks and the discussions regarding the creation of a Government of national unity – were pivotal in their coverage.

An average of 50 per cent of the total journalists working in each media outlet was assigned to referendum reporting, but many media had no consistent and comprehensive coverage plan. Some media houses, although lacking a written plan, had daily meetings on how to cover referendum. A minority of media had more comprehensive plans that included coverage of: the main polling stations, the work of referendum management bodies, advocacy fronts' campaign activities, popular reactions to the polling and statements of national and international stakeholders. As a rule, individual journalists covered in an often uncoordinated manner the main polling stations and the SSRC press conferences, with a general absence of perspective on how to follow up news and developments. Access to alternative views and opinions was not considered as a basic journalistic standard to be applied. Among the main challenges hampering referendum coverage journalists mentioned the lack of technical equipment and skills and the unwillingness of Northern citizens to openly discuss the subject of referendum for fear of being perceived as pro secession.

Referendum was covered in a variety of programmes, including news, talk shows and reportages from the streets. The coverage provided to the front supporting Unity was overwhelming compared to the voices advocating for Separation. Reporters – mainly in the print media – often tended to mix news and opinions. The presence of analysis or editorial of non partisan nature was extremely reduced, many reporters being politicised or affiliated with the ruling powers. The production of voter education was limited: only material produced by referendum management bodies was published or aired and almost no other civic society or in-house initiatives were adopted.

All media houses acknowledged the transparency, openness and approachability of the SSRC and polling staff. The accreditation process for journalists was generally well managed and referendum authorities showed a very cooperative behaviour with media professionals wishing to cover the ballot. However, most of media houses were not aware of the referendum debates organised by the SSRC and when informed they were not interested as the referendum campaign started in November and the debates were perceived as redundant.

<sup>4</sup> The Citizen, whose distribution and editorial line targets the South, was printed in Khartoum till then.

<sup>5</sup> This section is based on the answers to a questionnaire elaborated by SMEC and distributed to mentors and related media houses in the North.



No widespread episodes of harassment were reported during the referendum campaign period, although a few cases raised concerns in relation to freedom of the press and their ability to freely cover referendum related issues.

The National Media Council in Khartoum issued a decree suspending the publication of one newspaper, the Khartoum Monitor for two days, 22nd and 23rd of December 2010. According to the Media Council the newspaper issued several articles containing alleged episodes of incitement of secession of the South from the North. The Khartoum Monitor administration decided to resume publication only on 2 of January 2011, while the Sudan Tribune has already restarted publications.

According to the editor in chief of the Khartoum Monitor, there is no strong justification for this action; according to him: *“the claim that we create problems between the north and the south is not true. What happened is that we published articles for people who were expressing their views. Many people were against unity, they want secession and they just don’t say they want secession; they brought their justification about bad things done by the north. We published all these things, we also published ideas of those who were pro-unity, but many of them were pro-secession.”*<sup>6</sup> Another newspaper, the Sudan Tribune, was seized by security services for two days with no formal charges.

In addition, in Khartoum North, security services arrested a BBC reporter and the BBC crew covering referendum during the polling period although formal charges were not brought against them. The team was detained for an hour, interrogated and then released. During voting days the newspaper Barout, based in Red Sea State, was seized after publishing an article (on 9 January) discussing the possible spread of self-determination demands in underdeveloped Sudanese states after the South would secede. The editor-in-chief, and author of the article, was detained by the police with no formal accusation. Following this, state security services took him together with the newspaper’s managing editor to Khartoum North Court and then they were transferred to Central Prison of Kopper. Both journalists were charged with eight offences, including obstruction of the constitutional order, agitation and other violations of the Press and Publications Act and Sudanese criminal law, in court in Khartoum.

Many journalists expressed concern that after referendum political control over the media may become tighter and that legal suits may restrain media free expression further on. As a matter of fact, media in the North are often politicised and regarded as an extension of the ruling forces. Authorities exercise a strict control over coverage and journalists are aware of “red lines” that cannot be overcome when reporting. Although the average level of professionalism is relatively high compared to the South, basic standards of ethics and journalistic norms remain unapplied due to a mix of self-censorship and external political control over contents.

Media staff is aware that more training is needed in terms of management, news production, coverage of events, writing skills, political analysis, layout and editing. Much of the information published in the press is copied from the internet, making it problematic to identify actual sources and authors. Other problems hampering journalistic work are related to financial constraints, the lack of a viable advertising market allowing media houses to become fully sustainable, political pressures as well as the high politicisation of many media houses.

## 2. Southern Media and Referendum Coverage<sup>7</sup>

During the referendum campaign period Southern media houses extensively covered referendum related issues, including voter registration, civic and voter education, rallies, the views of common people and civil society organisations on the two options of Unity and Separation.

Editorial boards often did not have a clear coverage plan for the referendum, particularly in the regions. This problem was attributed to a number of factors, including: the lack of a meaningful pool of qualified reporters

<sup>6</sup> Source: Sudan Radio Service, 22 December 2010.

<sup>7</sup> This section is based on the answers to a questionnaire elaborated by SMEC and distributed to mentors and related media houses in the South. A meeting between SMEC representatives, SMEC mentors and the news editors of a number of media houses was also organised to discuss key aspects of the referendum coverage. Media involved included both print and audiovisual media.

and the consequent problem of understaffed media teams, financial problems, logistical and infrastructural obstacles such as poor communication structures, lack of equipment and power shortages. Weak management skills on the editors' side may have also represented an additional element hampering the development of a comprehensive reporting plan. Other obstacles hindering comprehensive and timely coverage of referendum were: inadequate coordination among reporters, lack of in-house transportation for journalists and crews, widespread lack of professional skills on how to report, and limited availability of English speaking journalists. Logistical problems also hampered the coverage of referendum events taking place outside Juba.

The main formats adopted to report on different referendum issues were news, call-ins programmes and talk shows. For many media outlets the main focus of the coverage were top politicians advocating for one of the two options and voters' opinion on this matter. Other journalists tried to give voice to the concerns of disadvantaged groups – namely women and voters with disabilities – as well as civic society groups.

Several media houses admitted that their coverage of the alternative sides of Unity and Separation was not equitable and most of the reporting was devoted to secession only. They pointed out that this lack of balance was the outcome of a number of factors, including the fact that voices and groups supporting Unity were extremely limited in number and they showed unwillingness to express their views for fear of retaliation by the Separation advocates<sup>8</sup>. The reluctance to publicly speak out in favour of the Unity option increased as the voting period approached. A partial exception to this trend was call-ins programmes where viewers, often Southern Sudanese residing abroad, called to declare their support to Unity.

During referendum journalists sometimes openly declared their support for the secession when reporting. Also, media houses felt that they had to carefully phrase questions during interviews on the two options particularly to common people in order to avoid being perceived as supporters of Unity<sup>9</sup>. Some of the journalists interviewed stated that in Khartoum security forces prevented them from reporting in the streets by confiscating equipment. Media outlets, with the exception of Radio Miraya, adopted no guidelines on fair and balanced referendum reporting.

Voter education and information was widely circulated – either as free or paid advertising - through the media, with spots produced by national associations, election management bodies and international agencies. Women were one of the main targets of these messages. Many media houses also devoted a number of targeted programmes and articles to inform voters on the overall process, including ballot procedures, time and days for voting, eligibility to vote and Go-out-and-vote campaigns. Many journalists acknowledged that the in-house produced voter education – such as call-ins programmes and songs - was not neutral but rather it conveyed a clear message supporting separation. In addition, politicians present as guests in talk shows tended to advocate for secession even when discussing non-partisan issues related to referendum.

All media houses acknowledged the positive role played by referendum administrative bodies – the SSRC, the SSRB and polling centres staff – in providing journalists with timely information on the referendum process and in managing a transparent communication flow to the public. However, most of the reporters mentioned they were not properly informed about the referendum debates organised by the SSRC; as a consequence they were not aware of them or they did not attend the events<sup>10</sup>. Similar, in the regions, media houses had no information regarding the debates. Some journalists were present at the debates held in Juba but they left after they were either cancelled or delayed for hours.

<sup>8</sup> Many journalists reported that even when they manage to interview individuals of Unity they were then asked not to quote their sources and to keep the conversation off the record.

<sup>9</sup> A journalist declared: '*Separation people would perceive a question such as 'Why do you support secession?' as an insulting statement opposing South Sudan independence.*

<sup>10</sup> An exception was the radio station Voice of Kajo Keji, where SSRC organised a few debates and both sides were given the chance to put their messages across, although voices in favour of Unity were a minority.

Media houses' outlook for the post referendum phase concerned three main areas:

- 1) the need to increase the local professional capacity by long term mentorship activities, rather than short-term trainings;
- 2) the necessity to improve the technical and equipment capacity, the organisational skills and the working conditions for the media staff including reporters' financial treatment;
- 3) the risk that public officials, governmental bodies and security forces may assume a tighter control over the media with a consequent loss of freedom for the press and access to information. As a matter of fact, many interlocutors stressed that so far the media have not been particularly critical of the ruling forces due to the specific context of the post CPA arrangements and the expectations for the referendum. After separation, the media may become more antagonistic towards ruling forces in a context where incumbent government is not used to being criticised or questioned. The possible introduction to the pending Media Bills is not always perceived as a decisive measure to protect freedom of the media as serious doubts about their effective implementation and enforcements were advanced.

## **II. Monitoring Media Coverage of Referendum: main findings and conclusions**

---

During the three weeks prior to voting days the media monitored ensured regular and intensive coverage of referendum and other political issues. The volume of referendum-related communication differed according to each specific media sector – radio, television and the press – as well as the audiences of each media outlet. In this regard, media addressing the Southern public focused the largest part of their reporting on referendum, while in Northern outlets the volume of referendum coverage was more subdued.

Referendum-related issues were covered in a variety of programme formats and the media ensured a comprehensive, regular and wide visibility to advocacy groups as well as to referendum administration bodies and their work. In the South extensive voter education campaigns were launched in the media; they were organised both by referendum administrative bodies and media houses themselves. Messages included explanation on how and when to vote, eligibility criteria, invitation to get out and vote for disadvantaged groups – namely women. Representatives of the SSRC, the SSRB as well as institutional bodies were often interviewed and they had the possibility to inform citizens about arrangements for the ballot.

In line with a long-term trend already observed during April 2010 elections, the editorial lines of each channel showed a clear polarisation based on their respective geographical reach. The access provided to the two opposing fronts for Unity and Secession was uneven as one-sided reporting prevailed in all media. TV and radio stations targeting Arabic-speaking audiences tended to give the Unity front – both parties and advocacy groups - the largest visibility; similarly, the media addressing the South generally gave the Secession front most of their airtime with the result that no Unity campaign or discussions on the consequences of both options obtained any visibility. The press showed a more plural vocation by covering the Unity and Secession advocates with greater balance than audiovisual media; however, newspapers in the North often covered the Separation front in a negative way, while Southern press did the same for the Unity front.

The two main political parties, the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and their respective positions regarding referendum, dominated the public discourse and media coverage. This feature was common in both audiovisual and print media although the press presented a slightly more diverse range of actors and views. In both geographical areas, other political parties received very limited attention compared to the two main ruling parties.

Explicit episodes of journalistic bias for one of the two referendum fronts were sporadic; however, a number of cases of "embedded partiality" were observed. Many media houses tended to mix news and opinions when presenting one of the two referendum options; in addition the choice of several experts hosted in television

and radio programmes revealed the tendency to ensure visibility to only one side of the referendum front. The kind of questions journalists asked often indicated the propensity to shape the answer towards a given direction, in the North in favour of Unity and in the South in favour of Secession.

The media generally acted as agents of pacification during the referendum by addressing constant messages against violence and for a peaceful voting period. No systematic episodes of offensive language were observed on radio and television. Politicians and advocacy groups did not generally resort to inflammatory language or offensive styles of debating and only a few cases were observed. These episodes involved attacks of defamatory nature against the SPLM on behalf of representatives of the NCP. In addition, before prime time news, SSTV regularly broadcast a video song whose lyrics were particularly harsh and provocative against Northern citizens. In the press a number of episodes of inflammatory language were observed mainly involving cases of defamation, particularly in the Northern press. In Southern newspapers episodes were principally related to calls for violence and messages of discrimination against Northern Sudanese citizens. Political parties and media houses themselves were often the main source of the offensive speech while the targets were mainly advocacy groups for Unity or Separation and other politicians.

During the referendum silence period beginning on 8 January and continuing over the seven days voting phase, most of the media did not respect the provisions prohibiting the coverage of referendum campaign activities and advocacy fronts. A number of violations were observed across the different media sectors, particularly in the press, although the access media provided was mainly devoted to comments and discussions on the likely outcome of the ballot as well as its consequences. As a matter of fact, most of the reporting concentrated on Secession as the natural result of the popular consultation and the related political reactions of the main stakeholders. However, a number of Southern Sudan outlets aired explicit calls to support Separation on behalf of both politicians and other advocacy groups; referendum songs supporting Secession were also broadcast during the silence period.

## 1. General Media Offer

During the 23 days preceding the voting days, political communication<sup>11</sup> was dominated by the Referendum although the three different media sectors being monitored – radio, television and the press – showed different levels of attention for this topic.

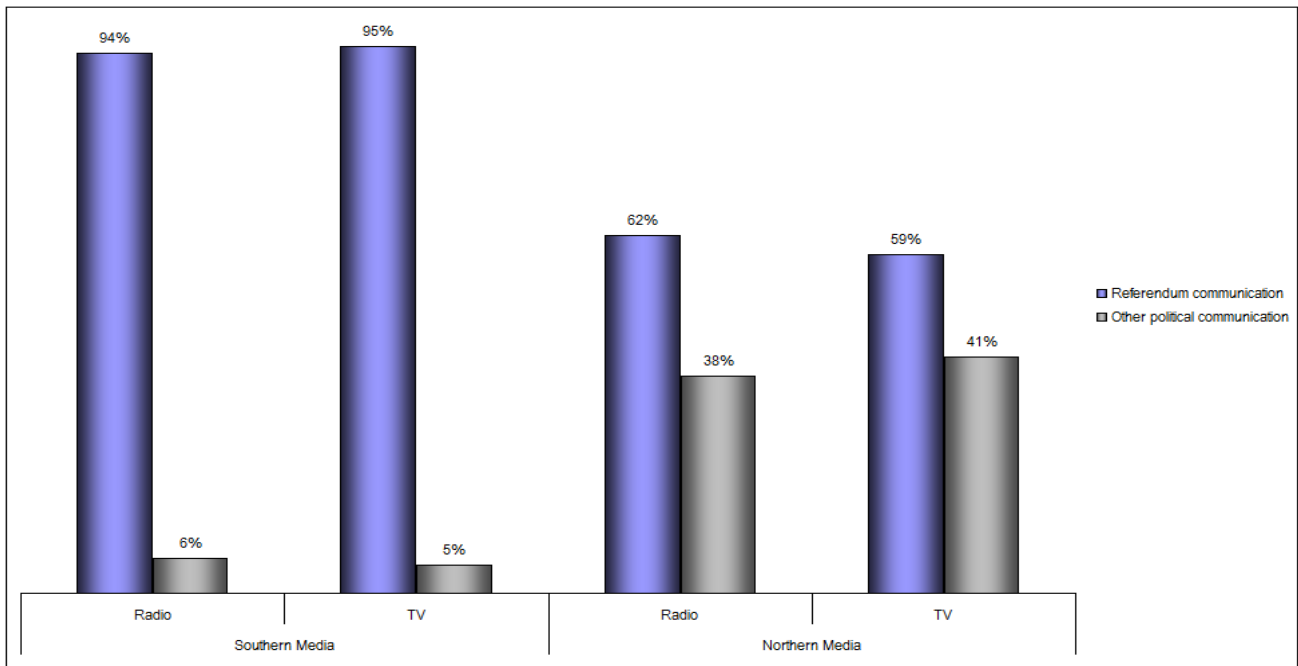
The overall volume of the coverage for this topic amounted to 78% of the total reporting devoted to politics on television and radio, although its journalistic relevance was different in Northern and Southern outlets. As a matter of fact, audiovisual media targeting Southern audiences<sup>12</sup> showed a higher level of referendum-related coverage than media addressing the Northern public<sup>13</sup>: the former allotted referendum an average of 95% of the total coverage devoted to politics, while the latter gave to this theme 60%.

<sup>11</sup> Political communication refers to any segments of communication involving the coverage of politicians, members of central and local legislative assemblies, parties, representatives of central and local governments, referendum advocacy groups.

<sup>12</sup> These include: SSTV, SSR, Radio Miraya, Radio Bakhita, VoP, and SRS.

<sup>13</sup> These include: Sudan TV, Blue Nile, Omdurman Radio, and Peace Service Radio.

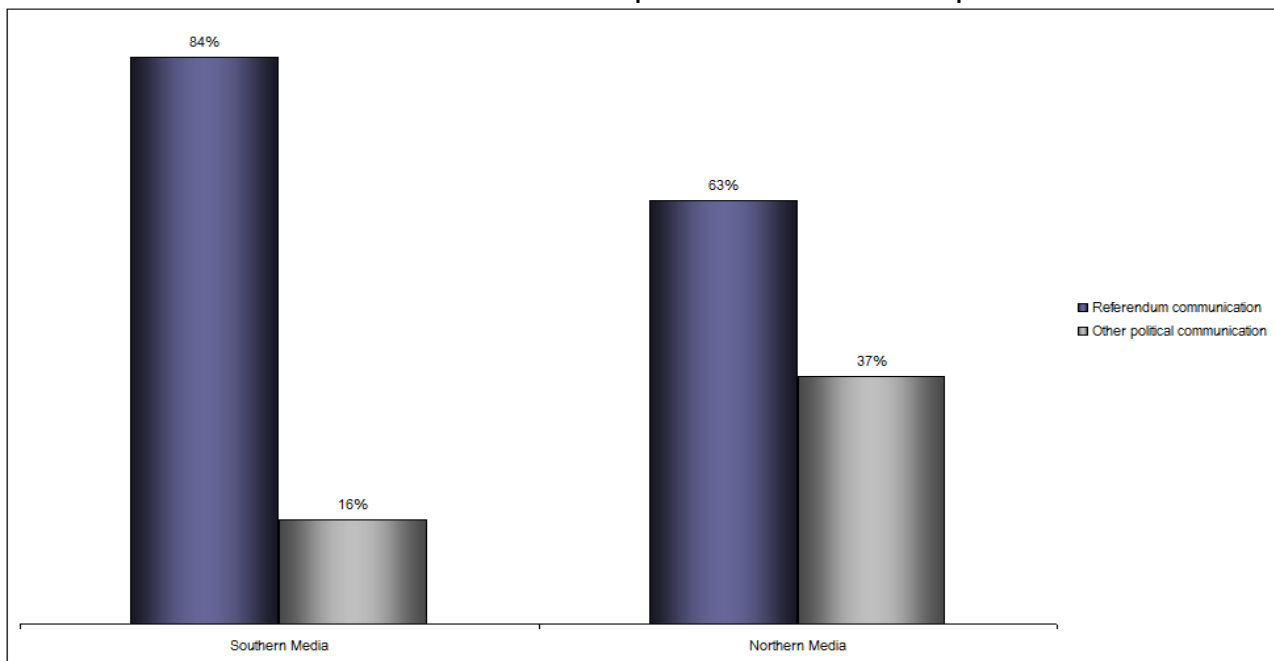
**Chart 1 Volume of referendum and other political communication on radio and television**



Base: 425588 seconds

In a similar trend the print media devoted most of its coverage to referendum, although the overall attention to this topic was less than the audiovisual sector (average of 67% of the total space devoted to politics over the monitoring period). Consistently with what observed for television and radio, the space provided to referendum-related coverage was higher in the newspapers targeting the South<sup>14</sup> than in the outlets addressing the Northern public<sup>15</sup>: the former allotted referendum an average of 84% of the total coverage devoted to politics, while the latter 63%.

**Chart 2 Volume of referendum and other political communication in the print media**



Base: 1248402 cm2

<sup>14</sup> These include: The Citizen, Khartoum Monitor, Sudan Tribune, Sudan Vision, Juba Post, and The Democrat.

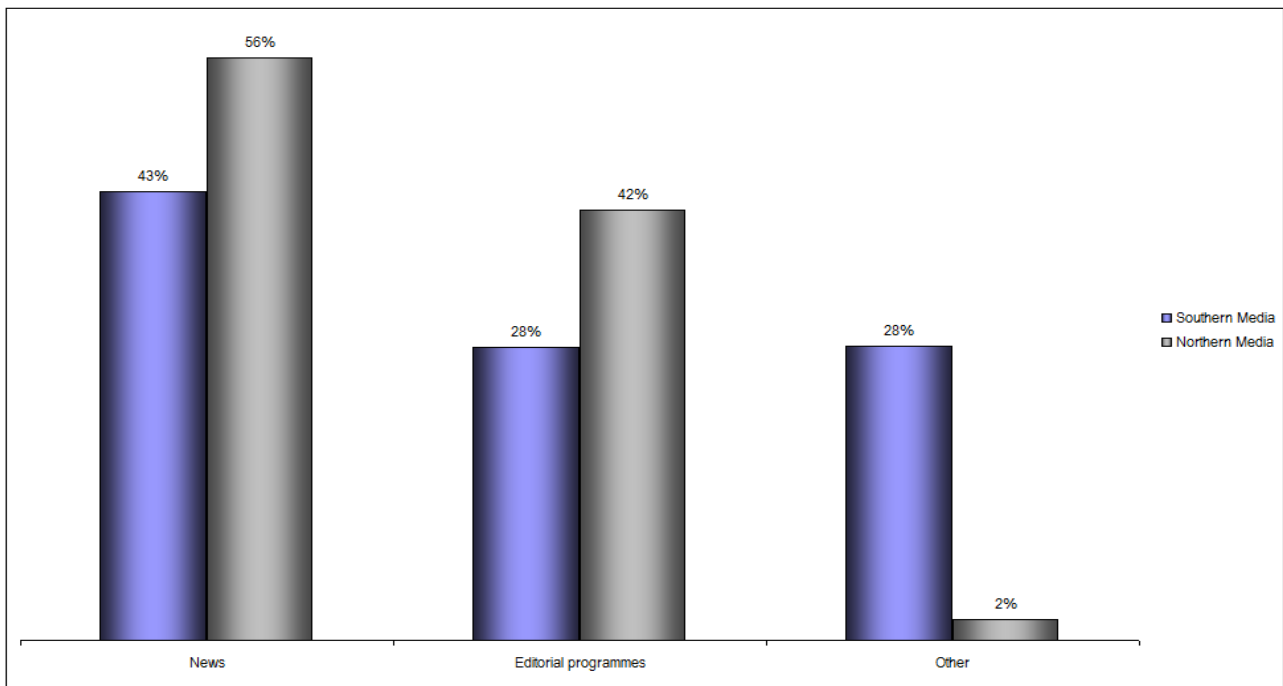
<sup>15</sup> These include: Ajras Alhurria, Akir lahza, Alyaam, Eltayer, Al-Sudani, Akbar Alyoum, Al-Sahafa, Al-Rai Alaam, Al-Intibaha.



Referendum was covered in a variety of programme formats with news and editorial programmes<sup>16</sup> being the main channel for informing voters, both in North and South media markets. In the South paid referendum advertising for advocacy purposes, referendum songs and voter education represented a relevant mean of communication (28% of the overall referendum coverage) while in the North coverage was mainly concentrated in news and current affairs shows.

Several channels broadcast voter education and referendum news in local languages so to ensure voters better access to information. Media provide large visibility not only to voter education but also to different referendum administrative bodies and their work, the preparation of polling stations, arrangements for voting days, the distribution of ballots papers and criteria for eligibility to vote.

**Chart 3 Formats for referendum coverage on radio and television<sup>17</sup>**



Base: 331415 seconds

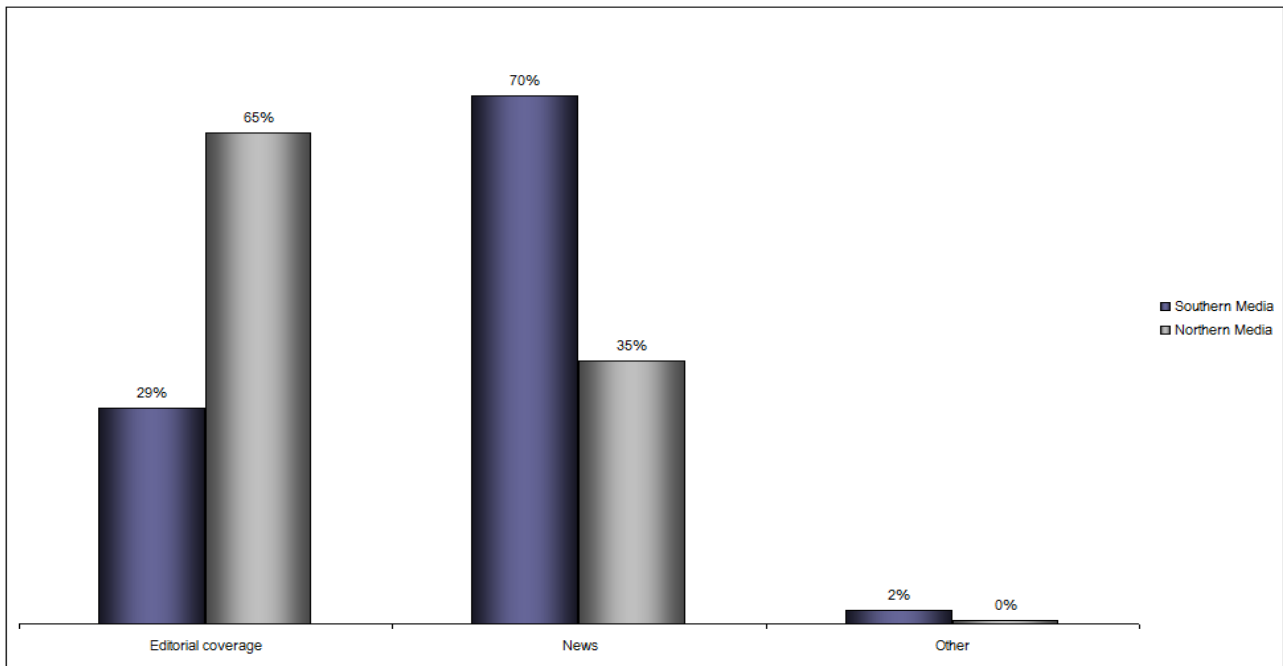
The print media covered the Referendum in a variety of forms; news and editorial coverage<sup>18</sup> were the main formats for referendum-related reporting, for both Northern and Southern newspapers, although they showed different levels of thematisation and discussion on the ballot. As a matter of fact, Southern outlets mainly used news coverage to report about the referendum, while the Northern largely resorted to other formats, including editorials and interviews to the main stakeholders.

The presence of voter education and information as well as free and paid advertising was less in the press than on audiovisual media; this was the likely outcome of the fact that advocacy fronts and bodies organising voter education perceived the print media as less relevant in terms of penetration and reach.

<sup>16</sup> Editorial programmes include all shows that are under the direct editorial control of the media house. These are: talk shows, current affairs, political debates, interviews and live broadcast of press conferences.

<sup>17</sup> The category Other includes genres like: songs, paid advertising, announcements, free advertising, and voter education.

<sup>18</sup> Editorial coverage includes all articles that are under the direct editorial control of the media house and that are other than news reporting. These are: editorials, analysis, interviews, polls, cartoons.

Chart 4 Formats for referendum coverage in the print media<sup>19</sup>

Base: 837706 cm2

## 2. Referendum Coverage on Television and Radio

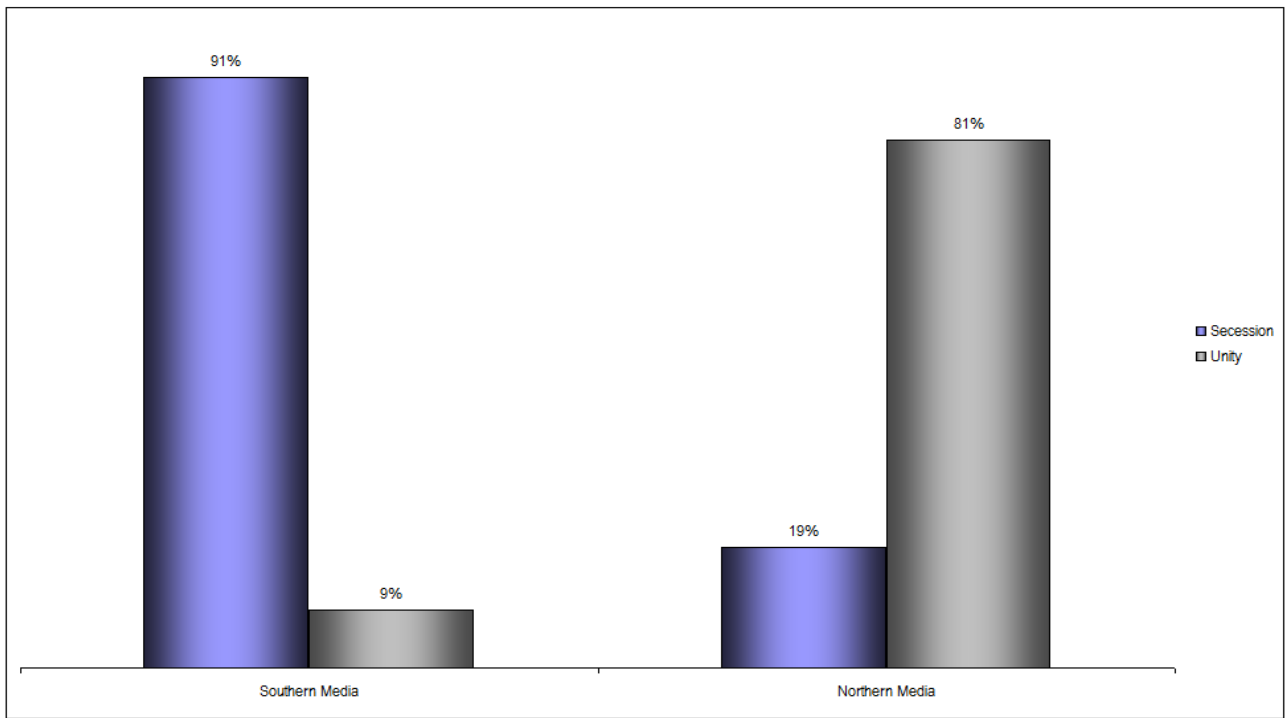
Radio and televisions devoted to referendum advocacy groups<sup>20</sup> large part of their reporting although one-sided coverage prevailed in all media. As a matter of fact, the allocation of airtime for the Unity and Secession fronts was unevenly distributed in the North and in the South, with Separation dominating South Sudan media and Unity monopolising Northern outlets' coverage.

On Southern radios the Secession front received 91% while in Northern radios the Unity front was allotted 81%. Southern Sudan Television devoted 96% of their coverage to Secession groups, while Sudan TV stations in the North allocated 81% to Unity. The two channels showing the most plural coverage – even if still unbalance - were Peace Service Radio and Sudan Television that devoted respectively 39% and 24% to Secession advocates.

<sup>19</sup> The category Other includes formats like: voter education, paid and free advertising, sports and leisure.

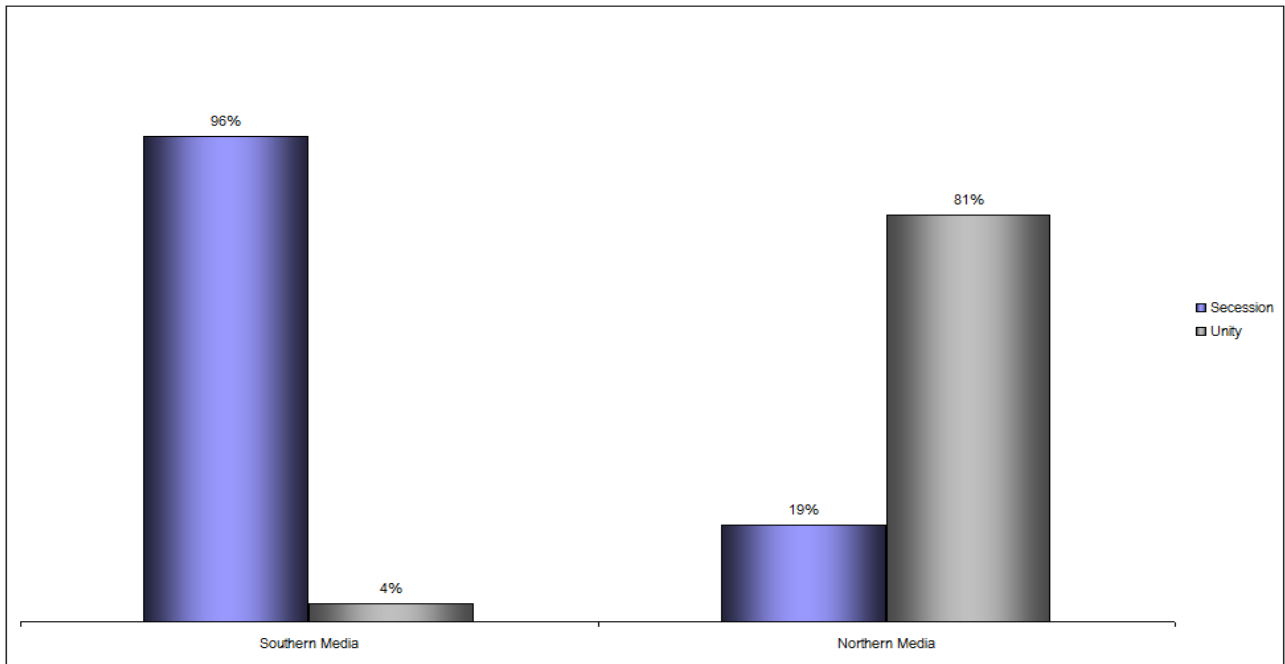
<sup>20</sup> Advocacy groups were classified on the basis of their official position towards referendum. In this regard, the data presented in this report refer to their official stand on Unity and Secession rather than the specific content of the message aired.

Chart 5 Allocation of airtime between advocacy groups in news and editorial programmes on radio



Base: 93829 seconds

Chart 6 Allocation of airtime between advocacy groups in news and editorial programmes on television



Base: 119785 seconds

**Table 1 Allocation of airtime between advocacy fronts in news and editorial programmes by channel**

MEDIA SECTOR	CHANNEL	Secession	Unity	Total
Radio	Omdurman Radio	18%	82%	100%
	Peace Service	39%	61%	100%
	Radio Bakhita	93%	7%	100%
	Radio Miraya	93%	7%	100%
	SRS	82%	18%	100%
	SSR	87%	13%	100%
	VoP	94%	6%	100%
TV	Blue Nile	11%	89%	100%
	SSTV	96%	4%	100%
	Sudan TV	24%	76%	100%
Total		61%	39%	100%
<i>Basis in absolute values (seconds)</i>		130452	83162	213614

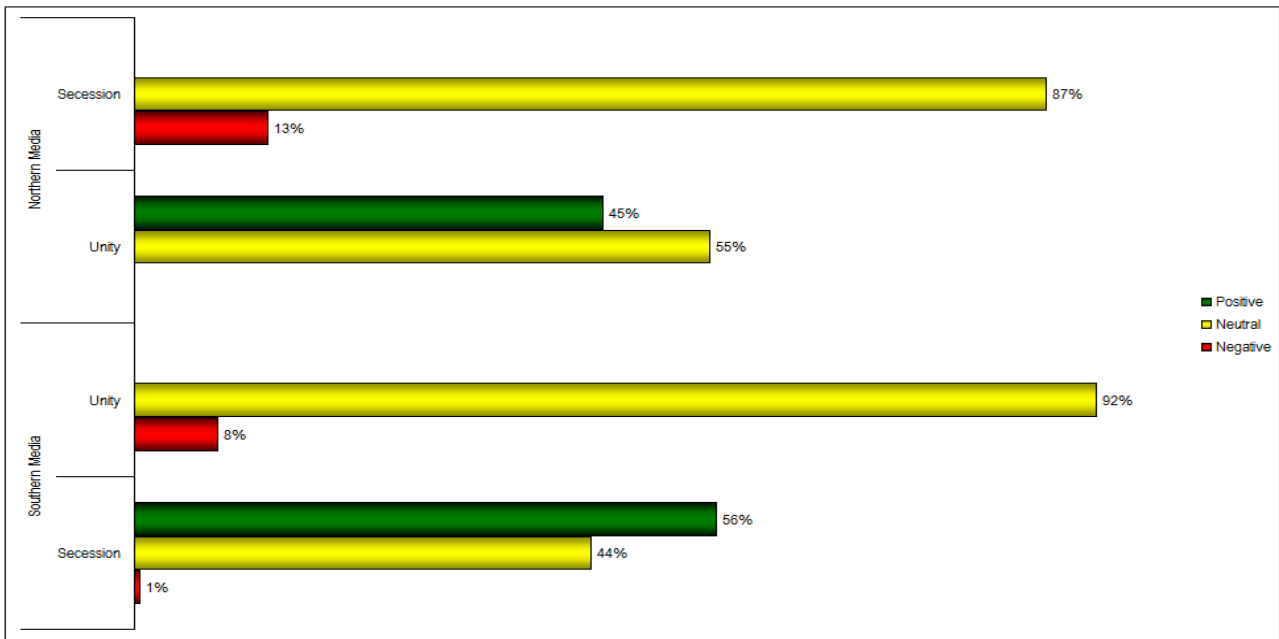
The tone of the coverage was generally neutral in all outlets monitored, a clear indication of the conciliatory role played by the media during the referendum and reflecting the constant messages launched against violence and for a peaceful voting period. Positive tones characterised the coverage of Unity in the North and Secession in the South, while negative reporting was extremely limited targeting the Unity front in the South (8% of their overall coverage) and Separation groups in the North (18%).

In spite of this general absence of explicit episodes of journalistic bias, many media houses tended to mix news and opinions when presenting one of the two referendum options; in addition the choice of several experts hosted in television and radio programmes revealed the tendency to ensure visibility to only one side of the referendum front. The kind of questions journalists asked often indicated the propensity to shape the answer towards a given direction, in the North in favour of Unity and in the South in favour of Secession.

No systematic episodes of offensive language were observed during referendum campaign. Politicians and advocacy groups did not generally resort to inflammatory language or offensive styles of debating and only two cases were observed, one in the North and one in the South. Both episodes involved attacks of defamatory nature against the SPLM on behalf of representatives of the NCP. In addition, before prime time news, SSTV regularly broadcast a video song whose lyrics were particularly harsh and provocative. The song displays images of Dr. John Garang with his lieutenants in the bush war, clip of armed war tank in front line action, a clip of soldiers armed with AK47 and rocket propelled garnet in bush war action, as well as a clip of militias armed with AK47 in a jubilant mood. In addition the verses carry explicit calls to violence against Northerners<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> The title of the video song was "Yes for Separation, No for Unity" and is played by the South Sudanese singer John Junub. The most inflammatory verses say: "Southern Sudan Independence.....we doesn't need Northerners.....! Northerner Sudan Independence.....you don't need Southerners.....! Yes for separation, no for Unity! Give them....! Show them...! Burn them....! Tell them.....! We don't want Unity.....We are tired of the war, we don't need Sharia law, and we don't want unity ..... Southern Sudan makes them fire....! John Junub makes them fire.....! Give them fire!"

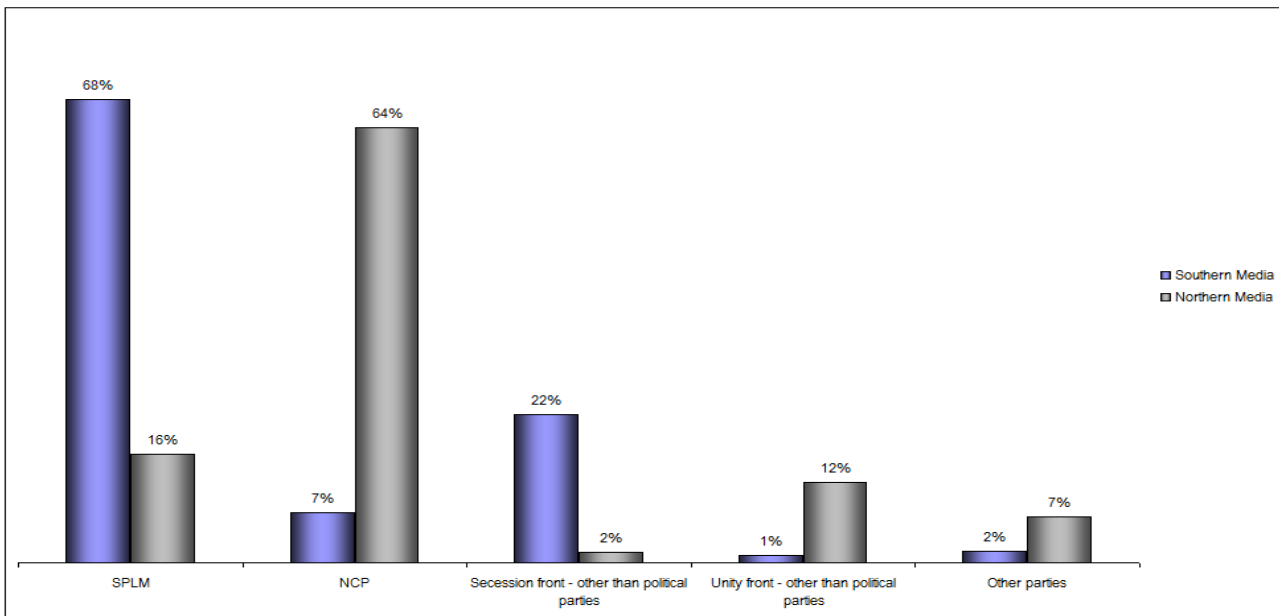
**Chart 7 Tone of the coverage for advocacy groups in news and editorial programmes on radio and television**



Base: 213614 seconds

The distribution of airtime among parties and advocacy groups showed that a clear-cut polarisation based on target audiences existed in the audiovisual media: radio broadcasting from the South devoted the widest coverage to the Separation front and the SPLM (90% of the total time), while Northern radios ensured the widest visibility to the NCP and the Unity advocates (76% of the total time). On television, Northern channels reproduced the same coverage frame by devoting more than 68% of their airtime to the ruling party and the Unity front; on the contrary South Sudan television gave large visibility to the supporters of separation as well as the SPLM, gathering together 96% of the total coverage.

**Chart 8 Allocation of airtime among parties and advocacy groups in news and editorial programmes on radio<sup>22</sup>**

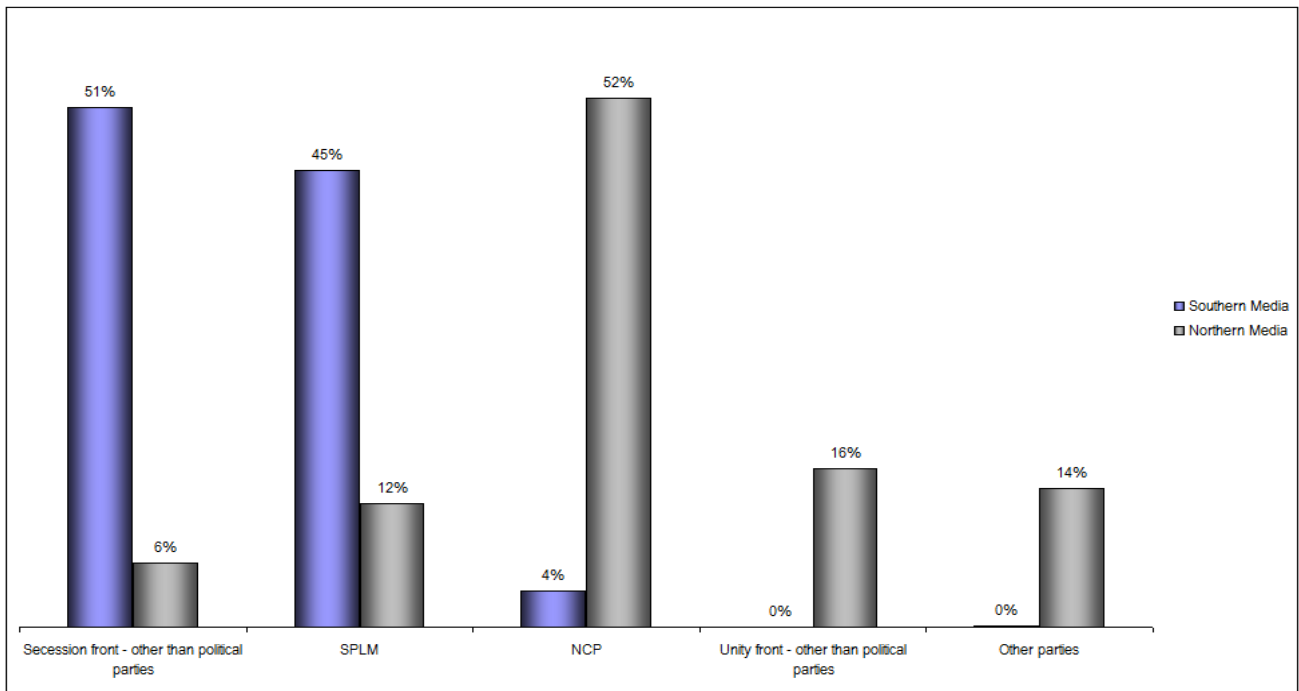


Base: 93829 seconds

<sup>22</sup> The category Other parties includes parties with an overall coverage of less than 2%. These are: SCP, SSDP, DUP, SPLM-DC, SANU, UNP, Independent, DUPO, UP-C, UDP, NJP, UNPM, USDF, URRP, FWP, UDF, PCP, JNA, and ANCP.



Chart 9 Allocation of airtime among parties and advocacy groups in news and editorial programmes on television<sup>23</sup>



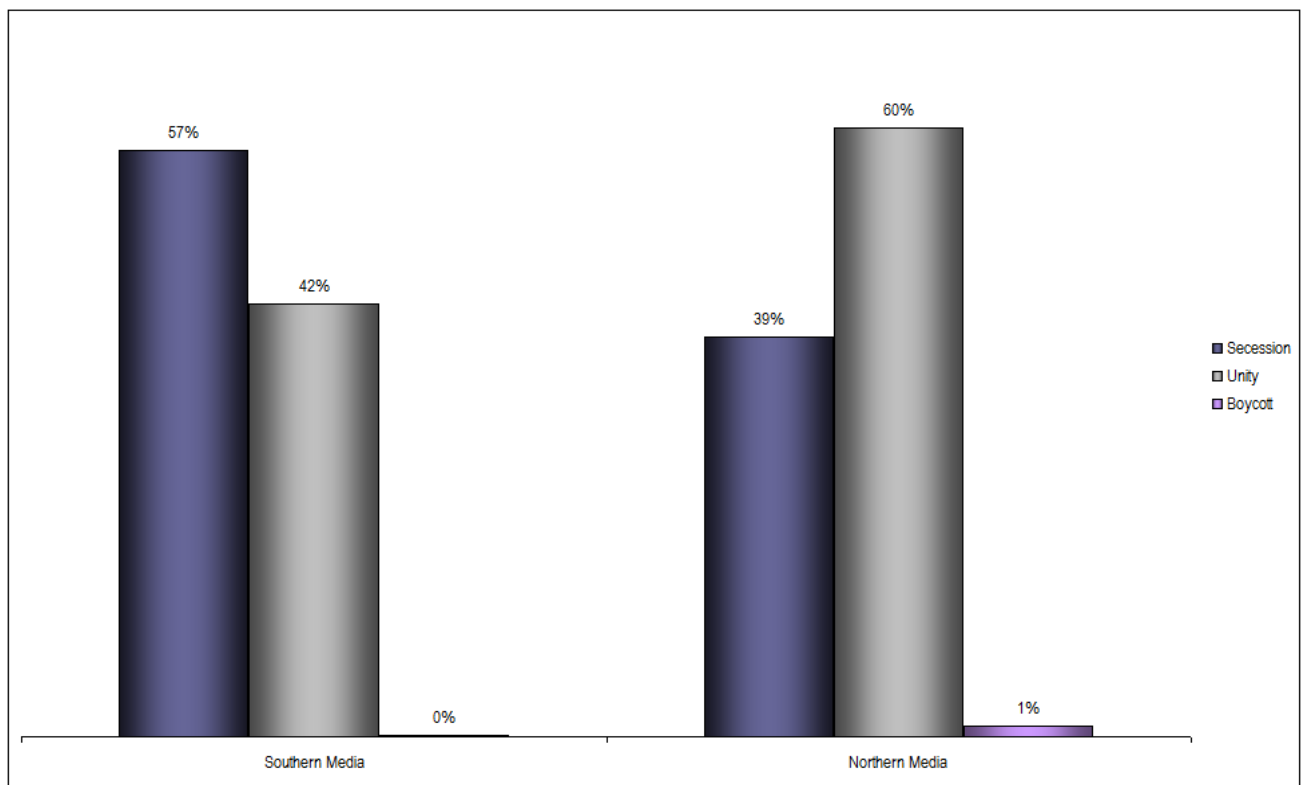
Base: 119785 seconds

The themes used to cover the two opposing advocacy fronts were generally similar in Northern and Southern media although the weight of individual topics differed: the Unity front was primarily associated with issues related to post-referendum institutional arrangements, the referendum campaign and the status of Abyei; the topics for the pro-Secession groups were mainly related to calls to vote for separation as a necessary condition to freedom, messages aimed at informing voters on how to cast their ballot and “Go out and vote” campaign and themes related to referendum administration. The media communication strategies used to report on the two opposing fronts were different also in relation to the target audiences of each outlet: when covered by Southern media the Unity supporters were linked to campaign events and discussions on Referendum postponement while Northern media focused their thematic coverage for the Separation front on post-referendum preparations.

### 3. Referendum Coverage in the Print media

The coverage of the two opposing fronts for Unity and Secession was extensive and regular in the press, although the allocation of space between them showed clear quantitative differences on the basis of the geographical reach of each media house. In the North, newspapers ensured the largest exposure to the advocates of Unity (60% of the overall press coverage), while in the South the two opposing advocacy groups received more balanced treatment. This result was essentially the outcome of President Bashir’s visit to Juba catalysing South Sudan newspapers’ coverage during the days before and after his trip.

<sup>23</sup> The category Other parties includes parties with an overall coverage of less than 2%. These are: SCP, SSDP, DUP, SPLM-DC, SANU, UNP, Independent, DUPO, UP-C, UDP, NJP, UNPM, USDF, URRP, FWP, UDF, PCP, JNA, and ANCP.

Chart 10 Allocation of space between advocacy groups in news and editorial coverage in the print media<sup>24</sup>

Base: 559287 cm<sup>2</sup>

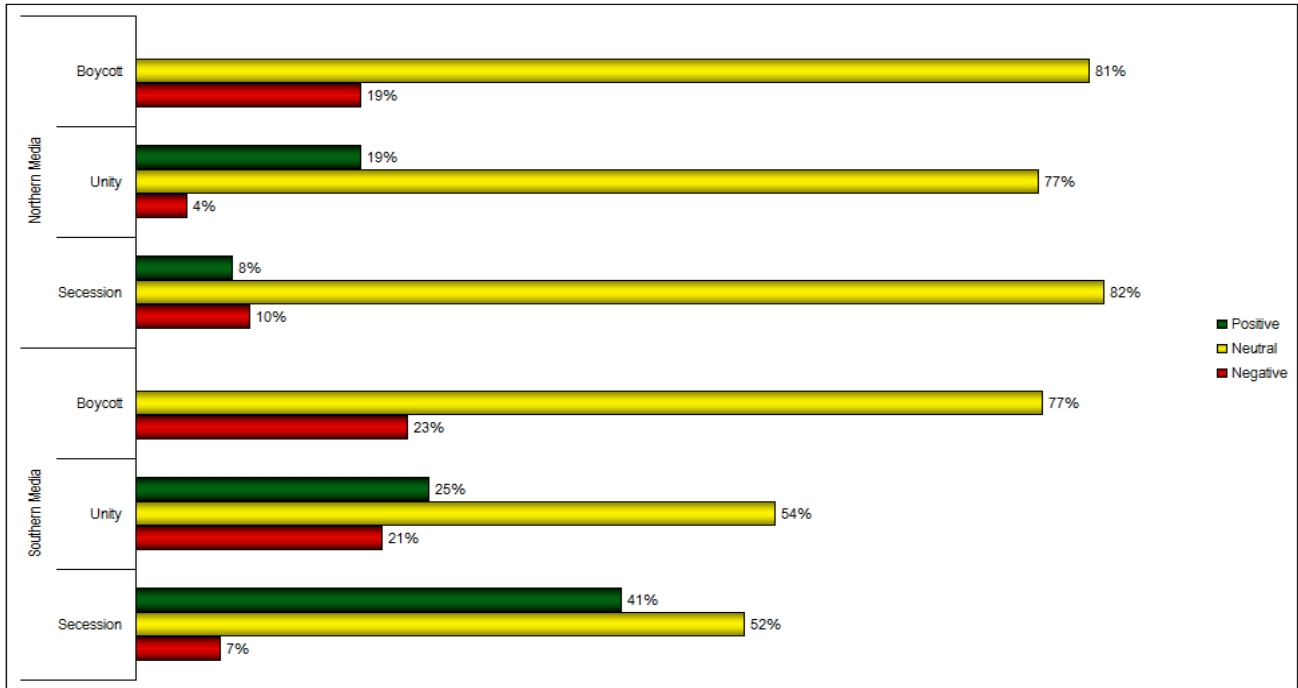
Table 2 Allocation of space between advocacy fronts in news and editorial coverage by newspaper

NEWSPAPER	Secession	Unity	Boycott	Total
Ajras Alhurria	48%	51%	0%	100%
Akbar Alyoum	31%	68%	2%	100%
Akir lahza	33%	66%	1%	100%
Al-Intibaha	56%	44%	0%	100%
Al-Rai alaam	26%	74%	0%	100%
Al-Sahafa	33%	66%	1%	100%
Al-sudani	35%	65%	1%	100%
Alyaam	36%	63%	2%	100%
Eltayer	47%	49%	4%	100%
Juba Post	79%	21%	0%	100%
Khartoum Monitor	61%	39%	0%	100%
Sudan Tribune	67%	33%	0%	100%
Sudan Vision	38%	62%	0%	100%
The Citizen	63%	37%	0%	100%
The Democrat	50%	49%	0%	100%
Total	43%	56%	1%	100%
<i>Basis in absolute values (cm<sup>2</sup>)</i>	239337	315398	4552	559287

<sup>24</sup> The front for the boycott includes all those groups claiming the illegitimacy of the referendum on the basis of Islamic religion. These are: some representatives of Islamic religious authorities, the Islamic Liberation Party, common people and some civic society groups based in the North.

When covering advocacy groups, the print media generally used neutral tones (74% average of the total referendum coverage), thus confirming the role played by the media acted as agents of pacification over the campaign period. Both in Northern and Southern media, negative coverage was mainly associated to groups supporting the boycott position that received in any case very limited visibility. The tenure of the journalistic treatment for the advocacy groups followed an editorial logic based on the target audiences of each media outlet: North Sudan newspapers used positive tones to report on the Unity front (19% of the overall space allotted to this group in the North-based press), while the Secession front received 41% positive coverage in the Southern press.

**Chart 11 Tone of the coverage for advocacy groups in news and editorial coverage of the press**



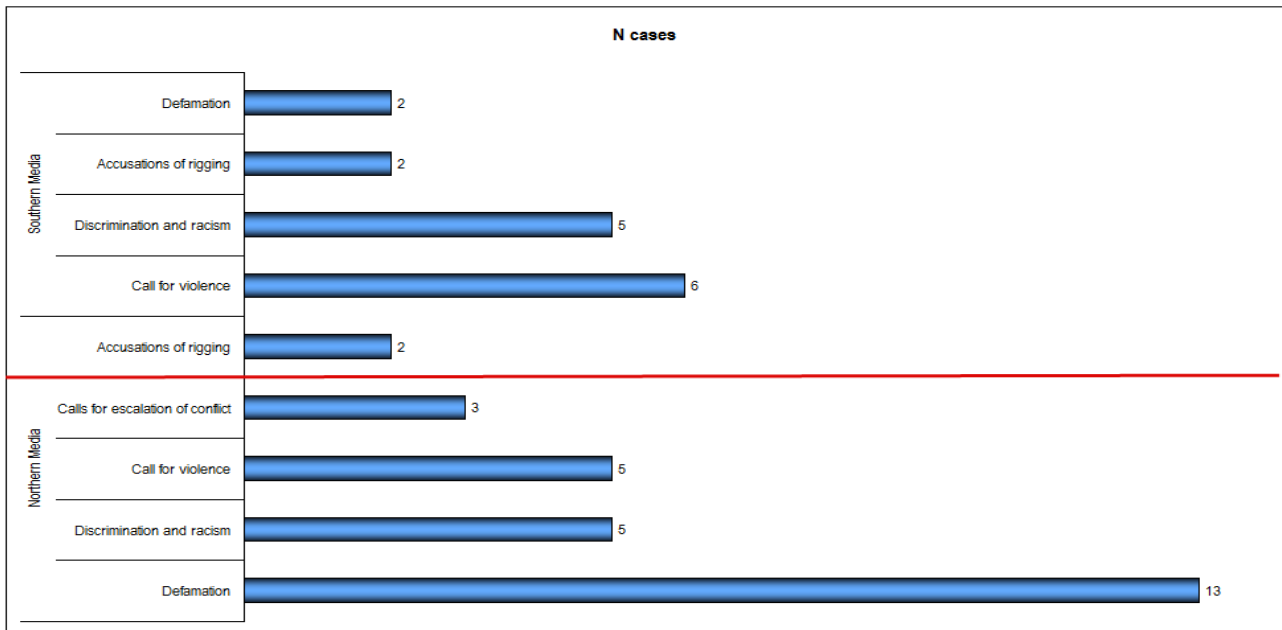
Base: 559287 cm2

In spite of this general lack of critical coverage, a number of episodes of inflammatory language were observed (a total of 43 cases of which 28 in Northern media houses): they mainly involved cases of defamation, particularly in the Northern press. In Southern newspapers observed episodes were principally related to calls for violence and messages of discrimination against North Sudanese citizens. Political parties and media houses themselves were often the main source<sup>25</sup> of the offensive speech while the targets<sup>26</sup> were mainly advocacy groups for Unity and Separation and other politicians.

<sup>25</sup> The source is the person or group originating the inflammatory speech, as reported by the media.

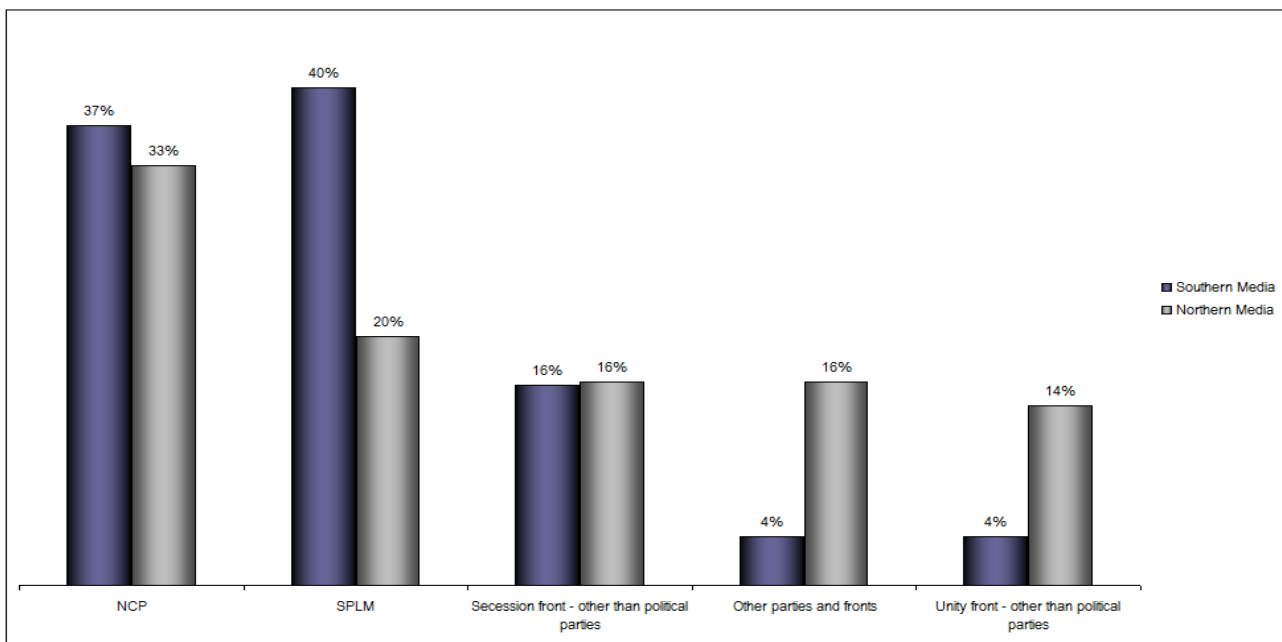
<sup>26</sup> The target is the individual or group against whom inflammatory speech is directed, as reported by the media.

Chart 12 Types of inflammatory language in the press



The allocation of coverage among parties and other advocacy groups showed a better balance than audiovisual media. The Northern press, while devoting the largest coverage to the NCP, provided some visibility to other actors, namely the SPLM and the two opposing advocacy fronts. Newspapers targeting Southern audiences gave the SPML and the Secession front the widest coverage but a relevant space was also provided to the NCP.

Chart 13 Allocation of airtime among parties and advocacy groups in news and editorial coverage of the print media<sup>27</sup>



Base: 559287 cm2

The themes used to cover the two opposing advocacy fronts were very similar in the Southern and Northern print media: in both cases, the two prevailing themes were the institutional arrangements after the referendum

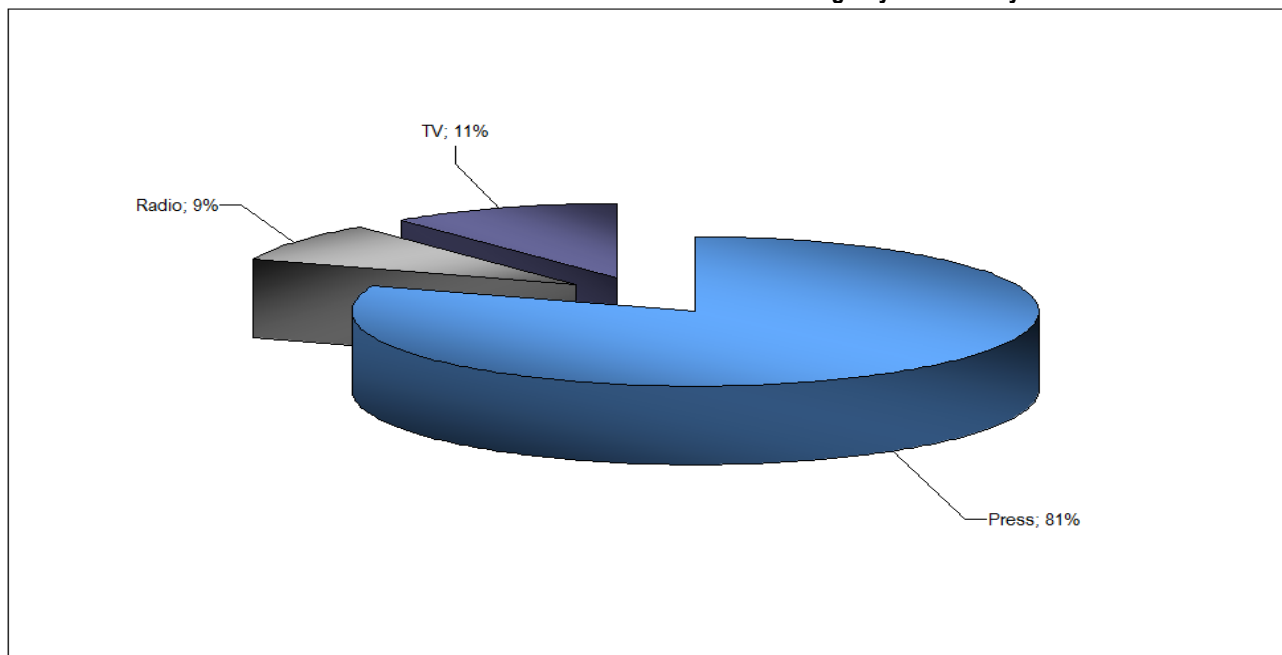
<sup>27</sup> The category Other parties includes parties with an overall coverage of less than 2%. These are: SCP, SSDP, DUP, SPLM-DC, SANU, UNP, Independent, DUPO, UP-C, UDP, NJP, UNPM, USDF, URRP, FWP, UDF, PCP, JNA, and ANCP.

results and the referendum campaign. The advocates of Secession were also associated to referendum administration and the discussions regarding the status of Abyei.

#### 4. The Referendum Moratorium and Voting Days Periods

During the referendum silence period beginning on 8 January and continuing over the seven days voting phase, most of the media did not respect the provisions prohibiting the coverage of referendum campaign activities and advocacy fronts. A number of violations were observed across the different media sectors, particularly in the press. Advocates of both fronts received wide coverage during this period although the access media provided was mainly devoted to comments and discussions on the likely outcome of the ballot as well as its consequences. As a matter of fact, most of the reporting concentrated on Secession as the natural result of the popular consultation and the related political reactions of the main stakeholders.

**Chart 14 Number of violations of the Election Moratorium and Voting Days Periods by media sector**



Base: 2017 cases

In this context, the media provided campaign opportunities for the advocates of Unity and Secession, by emphasising their comments on the possible results and their opinions of the ongoing ballot. The coverage provided to the two opposing fronts confirmed this trend and the advocates of Secession were ensured wide visibility by both Northern and Southern media outlets. In this regard, the media often acted as a mirror of an actual political situation rather than autonomously creating issues and events.

However, a number of Southern Sudan outlets aired explicit calls to support Separation on behalf of both politicians and other advocacy groups: referendum songs supporting Secession were also broadcast during the silence period. The press also showed a number of open ideological biases by openly expressing their views on Unity and Secession. Both the National Government and GoSS exploited their official position to campaign and advocate and promote Unity or Secession. Limited accuracy in news reports about voter turnout was observed with a frequent lack of consistency in the voting figures. Similarly, published opinion polls often had no information about their sample and margin of error.

SSRC and their staff received wide, punctual and inclusive coverage during this period thus allowing voter to be promptly informed on deadlines, figures and the activities of election administration during voting days. Similarly media coverage of voting process was comprehensive, with several field reports from various polling stations in the North, South and from abroad.



## Annex I – List of abbreviations

ACRONYM	FULL NAME
AA	Ansar Alsona Party
ABC	Abyei Borders Commission
ADP	Awareness Democratic Party
AMDISS	Association for Media and Development in South Sudan
ANCP	African National Congress Party
AWG-MM	Arab Working Group for Media Monitoring
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCP	Beja Congress Party
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party - Al Digair
DUPO	Democratic Unionist Party - Original
DUSP	Democratic United Salvation Party
EDG	Electoral Donors Group
EDP	Eastern Democratic Party
EPJD	Eastern Party - Justice and Development
FotS	Front of the South Party
FWP	Free Will Party
GOS	National Government of Sudan
GOSS	Government of Southern Sudan
HDP	Hagiga Democratic Party
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ILP	Islamic Liberation Party
IMP	Islamic Moderate Party
IMS	International Media Support
JAP	Juba Alliance Party
JMM	Joint Media Mechanism
JNA	Juba National Alliance
JSN	Journalists' Solidarity Network
LDP	Liberal Democrats Party
MBO	Muslim Brothers Organisation
MP	Movement Party
MSOP	Modern Sudan Organisation Party
MSUP	Maoyst Socialist Unionist Party
NASP	Nassiri Arab Socialists Party
NCP	National Council for Press and Publications
NCP	National Congress Party
NDA	National Democratic Alliance Party
NDFP	National Democratic Front Party
NDP	National Democratic Party
NDUF	National Democratic United Front
NEC	National Election Commission
NFDM	New Forces Democratic Movement
NIF	National Islamic Front
NISS	National Intelligence and Security Services
NJP	National Justice Party
NLP	National Liberation Party
NNDP	New National Democratic Party
NPA	Norwegian Peoples Aid
NPAP	National People's Alliance Party
NPC	National Press Council

NPP	National Popular Party
NRenP	National Renaissance Party
NRP	National Reform Party
NSP	New Sudan Party
NUDP	Nassiri Unionist Democratic Party
NUP	National Unionist Party
PCA	Permanent Court of Arbitration
PCongP	People's Congress Party
PCP	Popular Congress Party
PFDR	Peoples' Forces and Democratic Rights Party
PP	Pre Publication censorship
PSJP	Progress and Social Justice Party
RCP	Revolutionist Committees Party
SA	Sudan Ana Party
SANP	Sudan African National Party
SANU	Sudan African National Union
SAP	Sudan Alliance Party
SBP	Sudanese Baath Party
SConP	Sudanese Congress Party
SCP	Sudanese Communist Party
SDCMP	Sudanese Democratic Change Movement Party
SDPCES	Social Democratic Party Congress Eastern Sudan
SFLP	Sudanese Free Lions Party
SFNP	Sudanese Free National Party
SJN	Sudanese Journalists Network
SJU	Sudanese Journalist Union in Khartoum
SLFOP	Sudan Labour Forces Organisation Party
SMEC	Sudan Media and Elections Consortium
SNFGUP	South and North Funj General Union Party
SNFO	Sudanese National Front Organisation
SNLP	Sudanese National Labour Party
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SPLM-DC	DC - Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SRTC	Sudan Radio and Television Corporation
SSDF	South Sudan Democratic Forum
SSDP	Sudanese Socialist Democratic Party
SSolidP	Sudanese Solidarity Democratic Party
SSOUJ	Southern Sudan Union of Journalists
SSR	South Sudan Radio
SSRA	South Sudan Referendum Act
SSRC	South Sudan Referendum Commission
SSRB	South Sudan Referendum Bureau
SSTV	South Sudan Television
SSUDF	South Sudan United Democratic Front
SUDIA	Sudanese Development Initiative
SUDPC	Sudanese United Democratic Party Congress
SUFP	Sudanese United Forces Party
SUNP	Sudanese United National Party
UDF	United Democratic Front
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UDP	United Democratic Party
UDSPF	Union of Democratic Socialist Party - Fatma
UDUP	United Democratic Unionist Party
UFP	Umma Federal Party
UJOSS	Union of Journalists of Southern Sudan

UNP	Umma National Party
UP-C	Umma Party - Collective
UPopF	United Popular Front
UPRD	Umma Party - Reform and Development
URRP	Umma Renewal and Reform Party
USAP	Union of the Sudanese African Parties
USDF	United Salvation Democratic Front
USNP	United Sudan National Party
USSP	United South Sudan Party
WANUP	Wadi Al-Neel Unionist Party
WBP	White Brigade Party