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**Syria Signed a Solar Deal
With Saudi Arabia to Rebuild
Its Grid. Sudan Is Still
Waiting for the Same Phone**



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Research Team

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Syria just signed 760MW of Gulf-financed solar-plus-storage to rebuild its war-shattered grid. Sudan's \$3 billion grid-damage gap has no equivalent deal yet.

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The Hook

On 5 August 2026, Syria's state utility signed three power-purchase agreements with a Saudi contractor for 760 megawatts of solar capacity and 1,077 megawatt-hours of battery storage — a single week's paperwork aimed at a grid that more than a decade of war had reduced to rubble (Attaqa Energy Platform, 5 August 2026; confirmed by Al Jazeera and RT Arabic, 5 August 2026). Sudan's grid has absorbed a comparable blow — an estimated \$3 billion in war damage since April 2023, according to a UN Development Programme study (Radio Dabanga, 25 May 2026) — and it has no equivalent deal on the table. That gap is not about resources, sunlight, or need. Sudan has all three in abundance. It is about who is currently in a position to sign a contract, and it is closing faster than Sudanese planners may have time for.

The Argument

1. Syria just proved that a war-shattered grid can be rebuilt on contracts, not just charity.

The Syrian Electricity Company (SEC) signed the three agreements with Saudi Arabia's Al-Harbi Contracting Company at SEC's Damascus headquarters, covering solar plants in the Widyan al-Rabie area of rural Damascus (Attaqa, 5 August 2026). This was not a one-off: it builds on a February 2026 memorandum for a smaller 210-megawatt Al-Harbi solar project (Enerdata/Renewables Now, February 2026) and on seven broader Saudi-Syrian energy agreements signed at the August 2025 Damascus International Fair, which included feasibility studies for up to 1,000 megawatts of additional solar-plus-storage and 1,500 megawatts of wind (Attaqa, 5 August 2026). Syrian Energy Minister Mohammed al-Bashir framed the latest deal as part of a deliberate shift toward a cleaner, more stable energy mix rather than a like-for-like rebuild of destroyed thermal plants.

The scale of what Syria is rebuilding from puts the ambition in context: before 2011, Syria's installed capacity covered more than 99% of demand. War knocked out generation and transmission on a mass scale, and by Attaqa's current estimate, actual production now runs 2,300–2,600 megawatts against demand approaching 9,000 megawatts — a deficit above 6,400 megawatts (Attaqa, 5 August 2026). Riyadh is treating that gap as investable infrastructure: a private Saudi contractor, backed by a warming state-to-state relationship that also included a September 2025 grant of 1.6 million barrels of fuel oil (Attaqa, 5 August 2026), is signing bankable power-purchase agreements rather than shipping donated generators.



2. Sudan has the damage and the sunlight. What it doesn't have yet is the financing structure.

Sudan's numbers are, if anything, starker. The UNDP study puts war damage to the electricity sector at roughly \$3 billion since fighting began in April 2023 (Radio Dabanga, 25 May 2026; North Africa Post, 19 May 2026). Sudan's Industry and Trade Ministry separately estimates that some 15,000 transformers — each worth about \$46,000 — have been destroyed nationwide, with Khartoum state alone accounting for roughly 14,000 of them (Power Gen Advancement, 22 June 2026, citing Khartoum State Governor Ahmed Osman Hamza). On 21 June 2026, the government relaunched the Maxan transformer factory south of Khartoum, a Sudanese-Turkish joint venture, with an initial output of just 150 units a month (Power Gen Advancement, 22 June 2026) — a supply-side fix for hardware, not a financing vehicle for new generation.

Meanwhile, Sudan's renewable build-out is happening, but almost entirely as an informal, household-financed workaround rather than a utility-scale programme. Installed solar capacity reached only about 190 megawatts by 2025, far short of the pre-war target of 3,300 megawatts of renewables (including 2,190 megawatts of solar) by 2033 (UNDP study, via Radio Dabanga and North Africa Post, May 2026). War-era demand is real — the UNDP found Khartoum's household solar adoption rate above 7% — but it is being met by private imports at punishing cost: a 550-watt panel that cost roughly SDG75,000 before the war now sells for around SDG330,000, batteries have more than tripled in price, and the UNDP identifies financing as the single biggest constraint, citing lending rates of 20–35% with short repayment windows (North Africa Post, 19 May 2026). UNDP Sudan's Resident Representative, Luca Renda, put it plainly: solar could power Sudan's recovery "with these [finance, equipment, training] in place" — but they currently are not.

3. The missing ingredient is a bankable structure, and that is exactly what can be prepared now.

Syria's deal was possible because there is one recognized authority — the Syrian Electricity Company, backed by the national government in Damascus — able to sign a national-scale power-purchase agreement and stand behind it. Sudan's fragmented wartime governance makes an equivalent single-signature national PPA difficult today. But that structural gap is a reason to prepare, not a reason to wait. Gulf development-finance institutions and Sudanese energy technocrats — inside and outside government — do not need a ceasefire to draft a template PPA, define tariff and offtake terms, and identify which utility-scale sites (near existing substations, where transmission survived, or adjacent to the reviving Maxan factory's output) would be shovel-ready the moment a credible national counterparty exists to sign. Syria's own pipeline shows this can move fast once the political conditions align: from a 210-megawatt MoU in February to a 760-megawatt binding agreement in August is six months.



Why It Matters to the Reader

For Gulf financiers and development banks, the choice facing Sudan's power sector in the next two years is not whether to rebuild — it is whether Sudan rebuilds on diesel and imported thermal capacity, the path of least resistance for a fragmented state, or on the solar-plus-storage baseline Syria is now locking in. That choice will shape Sudan's emissions profile, import bill, and dependency structure for decades, not just its lights. For Sudanese energy planners and diaspora technical networks, Syria's structure — a specific utility, a specific contractor, specific megawatt and megawatt-hour numbers — is a template you can start adapting today, without waiting for anyone's permission to plan. For donors currently funding household solar as humanitarian relief, the UNDP's own findings suggest that relief is filling a gap the market should eventually finance instead — and financing, not panels, is the binding constraint.

Close

3Bi recommends that Sudanese energy technocrats, the African Development Bank, and Gulf development-finance institutions convene a joint technical working group before the end of 2026 to draft a template utility-scale solar-plus-storage power-purchase agreement for Sudan, modeled on the SEC–Al-Harbi structure, so that a bankable project pipeline exists and is ready to sign the moment a credible national counterparty can execute it — rather than starting that drafting process from zero once conditions stabilize.

This piece was produced through 3Bi's automated daily publications workflow monitoring regional and international climate and energy reporting.

This publication is produced with support from 3Bi's institutional donors; see the full funder list at 3bisudan.org.

Suggested citation: 3Bi Research Team, "Syria Signed a Solar Deal With Saudi Arabia to Rebuild Its Grid. Sudan Is Still Waiting for the Same Phone Call," 3Bi, 6 August 2026.

Publisher: 3Bi

Location: Khartoum, Sudan