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# 1.1.2. Main conflict dynamics

Intense levels of conflict persisted during 2025 as the fighting expanded into new areas.[70] In a large-scale military offensive,[71] the SAF reconquered Sinja (Sennar state) in November 2024,[72] the city of Wad Madani (Al Jazirah state) in January 2025,[73] and eventually Khartoum city in March 2025,[74] and the entirety of Khartoum state in May 2025.[75] Since then, frontlines of hostilities shifted from central Sudan to regions in the south and west[76] (Kordofan and North Darfur)[77] as the RSF refocused its military objectives.[78]

Particularly from May 2025 onwards, Kordofan became a major theatre of conflict as the warring parties sought to seize strategic areas in the region.[79] Notably, control over the strategically located city of Bara (North Kordofan)[80] shifted several times during the reference period.[81]

In June 2025, the RSF captured the strategic border triangle area between Sudan, Egypt and Libya in northwestern Sudan's Northern state,[82] known as the El Uweinat area. The group thus secured access to supplies and reinforcements from Libya[83] while severing military supply routes for SAF-aligned forces that were stationed in El Fasher at the time.[84]

In Darfur, as part of the military offensive to capture El Fasher (North Darfur) launched in May 2024, the RSF conducted a large-scale assault on the Zamzam IDP camp in April 2025, killing civilians, taking hostages and pillaging civilian structures.[85] Continued intense fighting in El Fasher resulted in the RSF's conquest of the city on 26/27 October 2025 following an 18-month siege, with reports of serious acts of violence being committed.[86]

Reporting on events around the capture of El Fasher, the UN independent international fact-finding mission (FFM) for the Sudan concluded that the RSF engaged in 'widespread and systematic' violence. These acts included large-scale killings, mass-scale rape, torture and other cruel treatment, as well as deliberate starvation of residents through the destruction of basic livelihoods and the denial of medical care and humanitarian aid during the prolonged siege.[87] Acts of violence showed an open intent to target members of African communities (non-Arabs), notably the Zaghawa.[88] The mission thus concluded that the RSF had acted 'with genocidal intent' and committed crimes against humanity and war crimes.[89] Meanwhile, fighting continued in parts of Darfur through to August 2026,[90] with strikes attributed to the SAF targeting RSF-controlled areas in the region, causing civilian casualties.[91]

By late 2025, the conflict had developed into a 'deeply fragmented' and 'ethnically charged' war. Fighting had escalated significantly as a result of mobilisation of civilians along tribal and ethnic lines for fighting.[92] A proliferation of advanced drones enhanced the warring parties' combat capabilities, resulting in prolonged fighting[93] and allowing hostilities to continue

independently from seasonal weather conditions. By the first half of 2026, attacks by armed drones had become the undisputed primary cause of civilian fatalities; Kordofan was the region most affected by fatal drone strikes on civilians.94 The use of drones by the RSF and SAF increasingly spread to areas outside Kordofan and Darfur, with strikes hitting targets in states such as Khartoum,95 White Nile,96 River Nile,97 and Red Sea,98 all located deep inside SAF-held territory at some distance from the main frontlines.99

In parallel, fighting on the ground between the SAF and the RSF spread to Blue Nile state in January 2026, involving clashes between the SAF and RSF/SPLM-N-Al-Hilu and SAF airstrikes.100 Hostilities further intensified in the state in February 2026 and were ongoing as of late August 2026.101 The town of Kurmuk, situated at the border of Blue Nile state with Ethiopia, changed hands repeatedly between March and August 2026.102 ACLED noted that the RSF's new focus on Blue Nile state was aimed at reopening the fight over control of central Sudan (Sennar, Al Jazirah, and Khartoum states).103

As of April 2026, both warring sides were reportedly locked in a 'military impasse' across the country.104 However, July 2026 saw an offensive of the SAF and aligned forces in North Kordofan that led to their recapture of the Al Sadarat highway (a key logistical route connecting Khartoum and El Obeid),105 as well as the towns of Bara, Jabra El Sheikh, Um Sayala,106 Gereij, and Um Girfa located along the road.107 This allowed the SAF to restore access to the state capital of El Obeid,108 a SAF-controlled city which is strategically located between the largely SAF-controlled east and the RSF-held west of the country109 and has been facing siege-like conditions during the conflict.110 Despite suffering territorial losses, the RSF continued its campaign to take control of El Obeid as of August 2026.111

The RSF's recent defeats on the battlefield were preceded by signs of growing discontent and infighting within the group's core ranks112 alongside fractures in its alliance with non-Arab factions operating in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states as part of the Taasis alliance.113 Following the military setback, RSF leader Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo was reported to have called on local tribes to mobilise114 and join operations in Kordofan as well as participate in a new offensive toward Khartoum.115

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