Please cite as: EUAA, '1.2.2. International actors' in *Sudan: Security Situation*, October 2026.

1.2.2. International actors

Despite the domestic roots of Sudan's current war,306 the conflict has seen the involvement of multiple countries as providers of support in the form of arms, funds, or diplomatic backing,307 including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Türkiye, Qatar, Iran, Algeria, Libya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Russia, Chad, and South Sudan.308 This section provides information on the conflict-related role of the key actors: UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Türkiye.

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The UAE has been assessed to be the RSF's primary foreign backer309 although Abu Dhabi has consistently rejected such claims.310 According to US intelligence sources, quoted by the Wall Street Journal (WSJ), the UAE provided the group with advanced Chinese-manufactured drones, small arms, heavy machine guns, artillery, mortars, and vehicles.311 Amnesty International (AI) found that the UAE also retransferred imported Chinese GB50A guided bombs and 155mm AH-4 howitzers to the RSF.312 In addition, since 2024, a UAE-based security company with links to Abu Dhabi's political leadership313 has reportedly facilitated the transfer of Colombian mercenaries to Sudan to assist the RSF.314 In return for backing the RSF, the UAE has allegedly sought the RSF's cooperation in protecting UAE interests in Sudan.315 These include maintaining the UAE's access to Sudan's gold,316 safeguarding investments in agriculture,317 and securing influence along the Red Sea coast.318 The UAE's support for the RSF was also reportedly driven by concerns about a perceived threat from Islamist currents aligned with the SAF.319

To transfer military supplies to the RSF, the UAE reportedly relied on logistical supply routes through eastern Chad, southeastern Libya, northeastern Somalia, amongst others.320 From late 2025, there were signs that the UAE was rerouting its lines of support for the RSF, as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Somalia began to deny the UAE overflight rights, while authorities in eastern Libya imposed a temporary closure of Kufra airport.321 In early 2026, Reuters pointed to sources indicating that the UAE had funded the construction of a camp in Ethiopia near the border with Blue Nile state to train RSF fighters, also sending military instructors to the site. As of January 2026, Ethiopian security services noted that 4 300 RSF fighters were receiving military training at the location.322 The UAE did not appear to have reduced its support for the RSF since the start of the 2026 Iran war.323 In March 2026, the UAE was reportedly seeking new aerial transport routes to support the RSF, running via countries such as Ethiopia and the Central African Republic (CAR).324

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia, which seeks to safeguard its security[325] and economic interests in the Red Sea region,[326] has supported the SAF through economic aid[327] while making repeated efforts at diplomatic meditation.[328] Riyadh adopted an outwardly neutral stance despite its preference for the institutional continuity granted by the SAF and the Al-Burhan-led de facto government.[329] Saudi Arabia has thus decried violence by the RSF and directed veiled criticism at the UAE for its 'foreign interference' in the Sudan conflict.[330] In January 2026, in what was seen as a response to the UAE's alleged logistical support to the RSF, Saudi Arabia was reported to have played a key role in facilitating a significant arms deal between Sudan and Pakistan[331] that encompassed the provision of Karakoram-8 aircraft, over 200 drones, and air defence systems to the SAF.[332] While in the first months of the 2026 Iran war, there were signs that Saudi Arabia was showing heightened caution in its backing of the SAF due to the latter's links to Iran,[333] subsequent months saw Riyadh reinforcing its support for the SAF. A Sudan-Saudi Arabia cooperation agreement was signed in August 2026.[334]

Egypt

Egypt has been seeking the preservation of Sudan's territorial integrity[335] and a centralised Sudanese state led by the military.[336] Its support for the SAF is underpinned by historical ties between the two countries' armed forces[337] and its interest in maintaining stability along the Egyptian-Sudanese border.[338] Following the outbreak of the Sudan war, Egypt initially sought to maintain an official stance of neutrality. However, tensions between Egypt and the RSF erupted almost instantly when the RSF captured Egyptian soldiers[339] stationed at Merowe Airport in April 2023. As the war unfolded, Egypt's military involvement evolved from covert provision of military gear, logistics and intelligence to a significantly more overt and consequential form of military engagement.[340] These included alleged Egyptian air operations against RSF positions,[341] joint operational coordination with the SAF (since October 2025),[342] deployment of Egyptian military personnel near front lines,[343] and the encirclement of a large Egyptian military unit by Taasis/RSF forces in Blue Nile state in March 2026.[344] Advanced military drones based at an airfield in Egypt have been carrying out strikes against the RSF.[345] Since the capture of El Fasher by the RSF, Egypt both reinforced its diplomatic efforts to end the war[346] and stepped up its military support for the SAF.[347]

Türkiye

Since the start of the war, Türkiye has supported the SAF by providing military gear[348] such as Bayraktar Akıncı[349] and Bayraktar TB2 drones and large numbers of warheads.[350] In the earlier stages of the conflict, Turkish defence firms also maintained contacts with the RSF to hedge potential risks arising from the conflict. However, as the war progressed, Türkiye came to perceive the RSF's decentralised, mercenary-style model of territorial control as a threat to its interest in the Red Sea region. By late 2025, this reassessment had led to a more outright defence alignment with the SAF, resulting in increased volumes of military aid, shipments of Bayraktar drones and technical assistance.[351] In the diplomatic sphere, Türkiye has persistently sought a role as a future mediator between Sudan's warring parties[352] and between Sudan and the UAE.[353]

- 306

Kinkoh, H., The flow of arms and money feeding the war in Sudan can be cut. What is missing is the will [Commentary], Chatham House, 20 May 2026, url

- 307

  Wilson Center, Conflict in Sudan: A Map of Regional and International Actors, 19 December 2024, url; Mbaku, J.M., Ending Sudan's civil war: A roadmap to peace and reconciliation [Commentary], Brookings, 20 January 2026, url

- 308

  Wilson Center, Conflict in Sudan: A Map of Regional and International Actors, 19 December 2024, url;

- 309

  Sudan Times (The), Guide to Sudanese Civil War: The who, what, where and why, 14 November 2025, url; DW, Sudan war: Could involved foreign powers stop the war there?, 31 October 2025, url

- 310

  Kinkoh, H., The flow of arms and money feeding the war in Sudan can be cut. What is missing is the will [Commentary], Chatham House, 20 May 2026, url; DW, Sudan war: Could involved foreign powers stop the war there?, 31 October 2025, url; Horner, J., The falcons and the secretary bird: Arab Gulf states in Sudan's war, ECFR, 30 July 2025, url

- 311

  WSJ, How U.A.E. Arms Bolstered a Sudanese Militia Accused of Genocide: Gulf Arab state has funneled weapons, including Chinese-made drones, to rebel forces, 28 October 2025

- 312

  Amnesty International, Sudan: Advanced Chinese weaponry provided by UAE identified in breach of arms embargo – new investigation, 8 May 2025, url

- 313

  The company is the called the Global Security Services Group (GSSG). CIG, Blood Money: How UAE Support and Foreign Mercenaries Enabled the Fall of El Fasher, April 2026, url, p. 4

- 314

  HRW, From Bogotá to El Fasher, 25 May 2026, url, p. 2; CIG, Blood Money: How UAE Support and Foreign Mercenaries Enabled the Fall of El Fasher, April 2026, url, p. 4

- 315

WSJ, How U.A.E. Arms Bolstered a Sudanese Militia Accused of Genocide: Gulf Arab state has funneled weapons, including Chinese-made drones, to rebel forces, 28 October 2025

- 316

DW, Sudan war: Could involved foreign powers stop the war there?, 31 October 2025, url

- 317

Atlas Institute for International Affairs, Abu Dhabi’s Strategic Footprint in Sudan’s Civil Conflict, 3 March 2026, url

- 318

Deng, D.J., The Rapid Support Forces and Sudan’s War of Visions, KAS, 10 June 2025, url, p. 11

- 319

Mbaku, J.M., Ending Sudan’s civil war: A roadmap to peace and reconciliation [Commentary], Brookings, 20 January 2026, url; Horner, J., The falcons and the secretary bird: Arab Gulf states in Sudan’s war, ECFR, 30 July 2025, url

- 320

Al Jazeera, The drones being used in Sudan: 1,000 attacks since April 2023, 3 February 2026, url

- 321

Badri, L., Paused, Not Resolved: The Saudi-UAE Rivalry and the War in Sudan, ARI, 13 May 2026, url

- 322

Reuters, Ethiopia builds secret camp to train Sudan RSF fighters, sources say, last updated 11 February 2026, url

- 323

Badri, L., Paused, Not Resolved: The Saudi-UAE Rivalry and the War in Sudan, ARI, 13 May 2026, url

- 324

Le Monde, The UAE reorganizes its arms supply network for Sudanese paramilitaries, 22 March 2026, url

- 325

Horn Review, Saudi Arabia’s Recalibrated Engagement in Sudan and the Red Sea, 31 August 2026, url

- 326

  Ardemagni, E., Saudi Arabia Has a Red Sea Vision, Not Yet a Strategy, 17 May 2024, url; Mbaku, J.M., Ending Sudan’s civil war: A roadmap to peace and reconciliation [Commentary], Brookings, 20 January 2026, url

- 327

  Mbaku, J.M., Ending Sudan’s civil war: A roadmap to peace and reconciliation [Commentary], Brookings, 20 January 2026, url

- 328

  Mbaku, J.M., Ending Sudan’s civil war: A roadmap to peace and reconciliation [Commentary], Brookings, 20 January 2026, url; Arab Weekly (The), Saudi Arabia pushes for political settlement as Sudan war intensifies pressure, 16 December 2025, url

- 329

  Horner, J., The falcons and the secretary bird: Arab Gulf states in Sudan’s war, ECFR, 30 July 2025, url

- 330

  Al Jazeera, Saudi Arabia denounces ‘foreign interference’ in Sudan after RSF attacks, 8 February 2026, url

- 331

  MBN/Al-Hurra, After Yemen, Is Saudi Arabia Poised to Act in Sudan?, 14 January 2026, url

- 332

  Elhag, A., Pakistan Steps In: Sudan and the Transformation of Regional Security, TWI, 22 January 2026, url

- 333

  Badri, L., Paused, Not Resolved: The Saudi-UAE Rivalry and the War in Sudan, ARI, 13 May 2026, url

- 334

  Le Monde, La guerre au Soudan, premier terrain du « pacte de La Mecque » entre l’Arabie saoudite, la Turquie et le Pakistan [The Sudan war, the primary terrain of the “Mecca Agreement” between Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan], 8 September 2026, url

- 335

Kinkoh, H., The flow of arms and money feeding the war in Sudan can be cut. What is missing is the will [Commentary], Chatham House, 20 May 2026, url; Asharq Al-Awsat, What Egypt’s Red Lines Mean for Sudan’s War, 20 December 2025, url

- 336

Deng, D.J., The Rapid Support Forces and Sudan’s War of Visions, KAS, 10 June 2025, url, p. 13

- 337

Mbaku, J.M., Ending Sudan’s civil war: A roadmap to peace and reconciliation [Commentary], Brookings, 20 January 2026, url

- 338

Horn Review, How Deep Is Egypt in Sudan’s War? The Shift from Support to Battlefield Involvement, 9 April 2026, url

- 339

Maher, M. and Farid, M., Reconsidering Cairo's Approach to the Sudanese Civil War, TWI, 30 January 2025, url

- 340

Horn Review, How Deep Is Egypt in Sudan’s War? The Shift from Support to Battlefield Involvement, 9 April 2026, url

- 341

Horn Review, How Deep Is Egypt in Sudan’s War? The Shift from Support to Battlefield Involvement, 9 April 2026, url; Asharq Al-Awsat, What Egypt’s Red Lines Mean for Sudan’s War, 20 December 2025, url; Maher, M. and Farid, M., Reconsidering Cairo's Approach to the Sudanese Civil War, TWI, 30 January 2025, url

- 342

New Arab (The), Echoes of El-Fasher: How El-Obeid could be Sudan's next humanitarian catastrophe, 6 July 2026, url

- 343

Horn Review, How Deep Is Egypt in Sudan’s War? The Shift from Support to Battlefield Involvement, 9 April 2026, url

- 344

Sudan Times (The), TASIS encircles Egyptian battalion near GERD, 30 March 2026, url

- 345

New York Times (The), The Secret Egyptian Air Base Behind Sudan’s Drone War, 5 February 2026, url

- 346

  New Arab (The), After El-Fasher’s fall, Egypt is desperately trying to end Sudan's civil war, 7 November 2025, url

- 347

  Africa Intelligence, Cairo increasingly drawn into the Sudan conflict, 13 March 2026, url

- 348

  Arab Weekly (The), Turkey is winning in Sudan. But for how long?, 10 June 2026, url

- 349

  Daily Sabah, Turkish defense industry reshapes Sudan’s battlefield, 23 July 2026, url

- 350

  Washington Post (The), A Turkish arms firm helped fuel Sudan's brutal civil war, records show, 9 March 2025

- 351

  Horn Review, How a Turkish-Saudi Axis Turned Sudan into a High-Tech Proxy War, 13 January 2026, url

- 352

  New Arab (The), Sudan's army chief welcomes Turkish offer to resolve conflict, 5 January 2025, url;

- 353

  Arab Weekly (The), Turkey is winning in Sudan. But for how long?, 10 June 2026, url; Al Jazeera, Turkiye’s Erdogan offers to mediate in Sudan-UAE disputes, 13 December 2024, url

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu